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DISPASSIONATE INQUIRY

INTO

THE BEST MEANS

OF

NATIONAL SAFETY.

By JOHN BOWLES, Esq.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE transcendent interests which are necessarily involved in NATIONAL SAFETY, must at all times justify an appeal to the Public, on a subject of such high importance. The right to make such an appeal is now strengthened, in no inconsiderable degree, by the extraordinary and alarming state of the social world, which renders the Safety of this Nation the last barrier against a flood of calamities, far more dreadful than it has ever been the lot of man to experience, or in his power to conceive. On these grounds it is, that the Author presumes to call the attention of his country-

men to the topics which are discussed in the following pages, and which, however imperfectly treated, will be found to have a direct bearing on the above inexpressibly momentous subject.

A

DISPASSIONATE INQUIRY,

&c. &c.

SELDOM has this country witnessed a day of such deep and universal gloom, as that which brought intelligence of the failure of the grand effort, which the Continent of Europe has lately been prevailed on to make for the recovery of its independence. The feelings displayed, on that occasion, by the British People, evinced the good sense with which they estimated the calamity, that had thus befallen them in common with the whole civilized world. In bewailing, however, that calamity, they are entitled to reflect with satisfaction on the part taken by this country in the struggle, the result of which has been so disastrous. Events too generally furnish the rule, though a most fallacious one, by which mankind judge of the policy of measures. Success alone is wanting to crown rashness and folly with admiration and applause;

and censure most commonly attends the failure of the noblest efforts of human wisdom. But in the case before us, the conduct of Great Britain bears a stamp of sound policy and true wisdom, too deep and clear to be effaced or obscured by the heavy pressure of untoward events. Even in the dark moment of failure and disappointment, it reflects the highest lustre on the character of Great Britain to have projected, formed, and animated, the powerful confederacy which is now broken to pieces. Instead of wishing to disown that measure, because it has been unsuccessful, I boast, as an Englishman, that it has been attempted; for I feel that it affords an illustrious proof of our steady adherence to that system of enlightened policy, which, during the whole of the contest in which we have been so long engaged, has led us to exert our utmost endeavours for the restoration of that general security, without which our own security must be ever, at best, precarious. That the principle of this system is wise, it is impossible to deny; and that the application of it, in the particular instance under consideration, was most seasonable and judicious, is no less incontrovertible. The still independent nations of Europe possessed, collectively, a force, more than adequate to the effectual resistance of their common enemy. But such

has the dominion of terror which that enemy had almost universally established, that they seemed fearful of uniting for their common safety: and such, in the mean time, were the incessant encroachments, the insidious arts, and the progressive aggrandizement of France, that there was abundant reason to apprehend it would soon be too late for them to unite, with any prospect of success. At such a juncture did Great Britain accomplish the difficult, and, apparently, hopeless task, of bringing forward a confederacy, and one too so formidable, and so abundant in resources, that it inspired a prevailing confidence in the approach of the moment, when the power of France should be once more restricted to limits compatible with the general safety. A confederacy, founded on such wise and just principles of common benefit and mutual preservation, that it seemed in no danger of striking on the rock, on which most coalitions have split—a dereliction of the common object for the pursuit of partial and separate interests: while the auspicious measure, which authorized the most flattering hopes of the speedy termination of those calamities by which humanity had been so long afflicted, was concerted with such consummate policy and address, that it burst forth at once, in full maturity, upon an astonished world.

It would be little to the present purpose to enquire into the causes which have led to a disappointment of the hopes with which this confederacy inspired every patriotic breast. It is, however, but justice to say, that Great Britain could only stimulate the continental powers to exertion, and that it was not her province, nor within her competence, to direct their operations. Having concentrated a grand alliance, which appears, even now that it has failed, to have been fully adequate to its object, she could not but leave its councils and its armies to act as circumstances might require. It may not, however, be useless to observe, that the failure of the attempt, which has been lately made to restore Europe to independence, has been chiefly owing, not to any deficiency of force, or to any want of bravery on the part of the allies, but to their forgetfulness of the real character of the enemy they had to encounter; an enemy who relies for success, infinitely more on artifice and wiles —on intrigue, corruption, and treachery—on an utter contempt of those ties and restraints, by which the rest of mankind deem themselves to be indissolubly bound—than on the valour and discipline of his armies. To such base means has revolutionary France been chiefly indebted for her triumphs; and of the

fatal influence of such means, in producing a most disastrous termination of the late continental war, the proofs are but too notorious, from the early treachery of Bavaria, and the violation of the Prussian territory of Anspach, to the fatal armistice which succeeded the battle of Austerlitz.

The Treaties which, by His Majesty's command, have been presented to both Houses of Parliament, confirm in a very material, and to us, most interesting point, the foregoing *general* observations; by proving that the formation of the late unsuccessful confederacy for the deliverance of Europe, reflects the highest lustre on the character of this country; and *that*, on account, not only of its unwearied industry, of its indefatigable efforts, in the general cause, but also of the sound policy, or rather of the consummate wisdom, displayed by it in this most important and difficult transaction. The true spirit and design of the league are clearly unfolded in the Treaty of Concert between His Majesty and the Emperor of all the Russias, signed at St. Petersburgh, the 11th of April, 1805. In the preliminary clause of that treaty, it is stated that these Sovereigns, " animated with the desire of restoring to Europe the peace, independence and happiness of which it is deprived by the unbounded

ambition of the French government, and the immoderate degree of influence which it is striving to arrogate to itself, have resolved to employ every means in their power to obtain this salutary end, and to prevent the renewal of similar disastrous circumstances." Then follows the nomination of Plenipotentiaries on the part of the two sovereigns respectively. In the first article of the treaty its object is again explained in the following manner: "Art. I. As the state of suffering in which Europe is placed demands speedy remedy, their Majesties, &c. have mutually agreed to consult upon the means of putting a stop thereto, without waiting for farther encroachments on the part of the French government. They have agreed, in consequence, to employ the most speedy and efficacious means *to form a general League of the States of Europe*, and to engage them to accede to the present concert; and, in order to accomplish the end proposed, to collect together a force which, independently of the succours furnished by his Britannic Majesty, may amount to 500,000 effective men, and to employ the same with energy, in order either to induce or to compel the French government to agree to the re-establishment of peace, and of the equilibrium of Europe." By the third article, "His Britannic Majesty, in order to concur efficaciously

on his side to the happy effects of the present concert, engages to contribute to the common efforts, by employing his forces, both by sea and land, as well as his vessels adapted for transporting troops, in such manner as shall be determined upon in the general plan of operation: His Majesty will, moreover, assist the different powers by subsidies, the amount of which shall correspond to the respective forces which shall be employed," " in the proportion of £.125,000 sterling for each 100,000 men of regular troops."

The sixth separate article of the Treaty of Concert displays, in the clearest manner, the genuine principles of the league. It is as follows: " His Majesty the King of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and His Majesty the Emperor of all the Russias, being disposed to form an energetic concert, with the sole view of insuring to Europe a lasting and solid peace, founded upon the principles of justice, equity, and the law of nations, by which they are constantly guided, are aware of the necessity of a mutual understanding, at this time, upon several principles, which they will evince in pursuance of a previous concert, as soon as the events of the war may render it necessary."

" These principles are in no degree to controul the public opinion in France, or in any

other countries where the combined armies may carry on their operations, with respect to the form of government which it may be proper to adopt; nor to appropriate to themselves, till a peace be concluded, any of the conquests made by one or the other of the belligerent parties; and to take possession of the towns and territories which may be wrested from the common enemy in the name of the country or state to which, by acknowledged right, they belong, and in all other cases, in the name of all the members of the league; and, finally, to assemble, at the termination of the war, a general Congress to discuss and fix the provisions of the Law of Nations, on a more determined basis than unfortunately has hitherto been practicable; and to insure their observance by the establishment of a federative system, calculated upon the situation of the different states of Europe."

The first observation which the review of such a concert suggests is, that the league was in its nature not only strictly defensive, but essentially pacific, in the genuine sense of that term. Its real object was not war, though a renewal of hostilities on the continent was likely to result from it, but the restoration of peace, by the only means which afforded any reasonable hope of that desirable event; and the destination of the force, which it was agreed to collect, was in

no respect hostile to France, but merely to give effect to demands which were nothing less than essential to the independence and security of Europe; or, as it was expressed, "to induce or compel the French government to agree to the re-establishment of peace, and of the equilibrium of Europe." In further proof of the justness of this construction, it is stated in the eleventh separate article of the treaty above cited, that "the high contracting parties" acknowledge "the necessity of supporting *the propositions of peace* which it is their intention to make to Buonaparte, by energetic demonstrations." And in the act of accession of the Court of Vienna to the concert it is stated that "His Imperial and Royal Majesty engages to execute, without delay, the military arrangements agreed upon at Vienna, as well for the armed demonstration *which is to facilitate the negociation*, as for the operations against the enemy, which may ensue."

With regard to the policy of forming such a league, considering the magnitude and the distribution of the force which was provided for its support; it is to be remembered, that the Emperor of Russia—whose generous ardour in the cause of Europe and of mankind, and whose dauntless intrepidity, in exposing his person in support of that cause, are above

all praise—by the fifth separate article of the Treaty of Concert, engaged to march, as soon as possible, an army of not less than 60,000 men to the frontiers of Austria, and another of not less than 80,000 men to the Prussian frontiers; and, that by an additional article, the same monarch is stated to have determined, in case circumstances should require it, to bring into action 180,000 men. It appears also, in a declaration dated 9th of August, 1805, signed by His Majesty's ambassador at St. Petersburgh, and delivered to the Russian and Austrian ministers, that His Imperial and Royal Majesty, the Emperor of Austria, had engaged "to embody an armed force of not less than 320,000 men." And it was stipulated that on the 1st of October, 1805, the Austrian army, in the field, should amount to 315,000 men, besides militia.

Thus did Russia and Austria alone stipulate for 500,000 men; and the King of Sweden, by a treaty with his Britannic Majesty, signed at Beckascog, 3d October, 1805, engaged to furnish 12,000 men, to act in concert with the Allies.

The league being supported by such a force, if any person be nevertheless disposed to think the measure rash and inexpedient, let him, instead of judging from the event, ask himself

whether, in the summer of 1805, he would not have thought the formation of precisely such a league an event *most devoutly to be wished;* and whether he did not then consider it as a subject of the deepest lamentation, that it appeared impossible to rouse the Continental Powers to act in a manner so conformable with their true interests. The coalition, it is true, was exposed to one leading danger, arising from the relative situation of the allied powers. It was to be apprehended that France would attack Austria before the latter could be supported by her Northern Ally. But surely it was not too much to expect, that, with a regular and well organized force of upwards of 300,000 men, Austria would be able, for a few weeks, to defend her hereditary dominions. The above danger was however pointed out to her in a paper which displays great ability, and which is entitled, "Remarks on the Plan of Operations proposed by Austria." In that paper, which is an answer to some observations made by the Court of Vienna, with the evident design of obtaining a more advantageous subsidy, (for which purpose that court magnified the military force of France, suggesting that it would be "desirable to remain at peace till a more favourable conjuncture of affairs,") it is intimated that

" the French, as soon as they shall see war to be inevitable, will put themselves in motion, and that Austria will have to sustain their first attack, till the Russians join them." It should therefore have been the plan of Austria, to act on the defensive, to calculate upon the rapid and most *direct* advance of the enemy, without any regard to the intervention of neutral territory, and to avoid an encounter till the arrival of the Russian forces. Nay, she was, in a manner, pledged to adopt such a system; for in her own " plan of operations," it was stated that " the army in Germany would await the arrival of the troops from Russia." And according to a stipulated *Marche Route,* the destination of the first Russian army was Brennau, on the Inn, which, of course, was understood to be the place of rendezvous, and at which place that army arrived two days before the appointed time. It appears, therefore, that the advance to Ulm was a violation of her own engagements with the Court of St. Petersburgh. If, instead of so rash a movement, she had cautiously acted upon a defensive system, the enemy must either have ceased to advance, whereby he would have afforded the allied forces an opportunity of effecting a junction, or he must at length have been obliged to fight under great disadvantages; at an immense distance from

home and from his supplies, fatigued with a long and rapid march, probably deficient in heavy artillery, of which such a march would not allow the conveyance, and in the heart of an enemy's country, where a single reverse might prove fatal. Of the infatuation with which Austria pursued a system altogether contrasted to that which policy so clearly pointed out, the disasters at Ulm afford a melancholy proof. But so powerful were the resources provided for the support of the league, that, even after those disasters, the case of the allies was far from being desperate. Nay, the battle of Austerlitz did not render them so. It was that act of unprecedented weakness and folly, the armistice subsequent to that battle, which gave the death-blow to the cause of the allies.

It is true the co-operation of Prussia was not even calculated upon in the confederacy. But before the league is condemned because *that* power was not a party to it, it should be made to appear, either that there was a neglect of any practicable means to obtain her accession to the alliance, or that, because such accession could not be obtained, the opportunity of putting in action the means which were actually provided ought to have been sacrificed. It appears, however, from " the plan of operations proposed by the Court of Vienna," that " a great and important step was taken by the Emperor of all the Russia:

at the Court of Berlin," the result of which was to determine how far the allies might "reckon upon Prussian co-operation, upon the neutrality of that power, or its rejection of" the "propositions" which had been made to it. But if, notwithstanding these endeavours to engage the co-operation of Prussia, or, at all events, to ascertain her dispositions and her views, any person should think that, while any uncertainty hung about the politics of that power, all operations should have been suspended, he would do well to consider seriously the following reasoning contained in the "Remarks" on the above mentioned "Plan," and intended as a reply to the observations made by the Court of Vienna, that it was "desirable to remain at peace till a more favourable conjuncture of affairs." To this temporizing suggestion it was forcibly replied in the "Remarks," that—"this reasoning would be solid and just if it were probable that any more favourable conjuncture of affairs should hereafter arise, if the Court of Vienna could, in the mean while, prepare and augment its forces, and if the state of things should, in other respects, remain unaltered. But, *while Europe temporizes*, Buonaparte's government acquires every day new stability. His power encreases by the subjugation and new organization of Lombardy and Parma. The relative geographical advantages can undergo no change fa-

vourable to Austria; but in fact the contrary. Besides, there can be nothing more dangerous than the policy of the French government, which has ever gained more by negociations, than by its arms. If we enumerate the battles of the last war, the French lost as many as they gained. It is always in the intervals between one great period and another, in seasons of insincere nominal peace, that they enlarge their dominions." These observations clearly evince the hand of a master.

It ought also to be remembered that, althoug the co-operation of Prussia was not, and could not be secured in the first instance, there was reason to hope for that co-operation, especially if the campaign had opened in any degree auspiciously, on the part of the Allies. Indeed, though the very reverse of this was the case, the event seems to have justified such a hope; for, upon the violation of the neutral territory of Anspach, the King of Prussia, who, till then, had observed a strict neutrality, not only allowed a passage to the Russian army through Silesia, but proposed terms of pacification to the Belligerent Powers, which were of such a nature, that the Allies readily acceded to them; and he intimated, that if they were not accepted by Buonaparte in a month, he would enforce their acceptance by arms, for which purpose he actually marched one of the finest armies that ever

took the field. Thus, notwithstanding the disasters at Ulm, the Coalition had a fair prospect of obtaining a great melioration of the state of Europe (for such was the effect of the terms proposed by Prussia, or the Allies would not have listened to them) and, at all events, of securing the accession of that power to the league, in which case all the great States of the Continent would have been united in a grand confederacy for the restoration of its independence. This prospect was, however, blasted, by the gallant, though rash impetuosity of the allied armies. If those armies had fallen back, as obvious policy required them to do, and waited for the Russian reinforcements, the situation of Buonaparte, upon the arrival of the Archduke Charles, with an unbeaten army, would have been most critical and perilous. But the battle of Austerlitz, being followed by an armistice, which imbecility alone could have granted, rescued him from that situation, and enabled him to triumph over the best concerted league which has been opposed to the boundless ambition of Revolutionary France.

One more circumstance attending the formation of the above league, deserves to be noticed, as it evinces both the sound policy of the British government, and its indefatigable endeavours to improve every opportunity of exciting the

powers of Europe to unite against an enemy, who owed his successes more to their divisions, than to his own strength and resources. By forming the concert with Russia alone, and by engaging that power to employ its influence with Austria, in order to induce the latter to accede to the plan, the Cabinet of London took the best, perhaps the only possible means, not only of obtaining the wished for alliance, but also of preventing the concert from being discovered and frustrated by France, before it could be brought to maturity. To this circumstance it was owing that the league was completed with such secrecy, as to justify the observation before made, that " it burst forth, at once, in full maturity upon an astonished world."

A sense, both of justice and of gratitude, demands the acknowledgement that the confederacy which bade fair to rescue Europe from the state of debasement and vassalage in which she was plunged, and to restore her to independence and security, was the work of that great Statesman, whose loss this country has deplored as one of the heaviest calamities which could possibly befall it; and was a glorious termination of his illustrious life:—a work which, notwithstanding its failure, will excite the wonder of future ages—

and which would be sufficient to transmit, with unrivalled lustre, the name of Pitt to the latest posterity. This is no exaggeration. In the eye of unbiassed reason, the framer of the late powerful, and well-concerted league, deserves, on *that* account, no less applause than all mankind would have been eager to bestow on him, if it had met with the most complete success; and he had been universally hailed, as in that case he must have been—the deliverer of Europe, from the most ferocious, oppressive, and wide spreading tyranny, that has ever been established on the face of the earth.

This tribute is due to departed excellence; and it will be felt to be so by many who have been backward in doing justice to living worth. A higher tribute, however, to *that* excellence is demanded by the dearest interests of this country. As by contemplating great characters, the mind is warmed with admiration, until it kindles into congeniality, nothing can be better calculated to raise the mind of this country to a level with its present most arduous situation, than the contemplation of the character of Mr. Pitt. But who shall attempt to delineate such a character? Who can adequately describe those matchless talents, which excited the astonishment even of

those who were best acquainted with the models of Grecian and Roman eloquence; talents, too, so various, as never to have been before united in the same individual; each of which was sufficient to render its possessor an object of the highest admiration, and which, collectively, formed a constellation of genius and ability, such as had never before illumed the political world? Mr. Pitt, however, possessed far higher claims to admiration and estimation, than it is in the power of talents to bestow. He was cast upon times which called for an uncommon display of those qualities in which true greatness consists, and he displayed those qualities in a manner, certainly never surpassed, perhaps never equalled. By his comprehension, energy, and firmness of mind; by his decision of character; by his intrepidity of soul; he became the bulwark, and, under Providence, the preserver of his country, at a crisis of unprecedented difficulty, danger, and dismay.—But his highest merits are yet untouched. If it be true that "an honest man's the noblest work of God," how noble a work was that man, who not only maintained the most perfect integrity, the most unsullied purity, in situations where those virtues are exposed to the severest trials, but who superadded thereto, such a disinterestedness of mind, such an indifference to every

personal feeling and consideration, such an entire and absolute devotedness to his country that in him the attachment to self, which seems to be inseparably interwoven with our nature, was lost and absorbed in unceasing solicitude for the public welfare.

After all, to do justice to this truly great man, he must be viewed in that trying situation in which all temporal interests fade away, and an eternal scene opens to the view. In that awful state he shone with encreased lustre. Building his hopes of approaching and endless felicity on the only *safe* foundation, he still continued to feel that solicitude for his country, to which his life was a sacrifice; on his death bed, he displayed the highest excellence that can adorn the human character; and, with his expiring breath, he proved himself a real patriot, and a true Christian.

But although the formation of the late powerful confederacy for the deliverance of Europe is so honourable to this country, and although its miscarriage was owing to causes which it was not in our power to controul, it cannot be denied that our situation, in consequence of that miscarriage, is become far more critical and perilous than it has hitherto been. It behoves us, however, to look that situation manfully in the face; to take the utmost care that our views of it be just; and to cherish

those sentiments and feelings which it ought to inspire, and which will be most favourable to such exertions as may be found necessary to bring us safely and honourably out of the present most arduous contest, the termination of which seems more distant than ever.

That the domineering and mischievous power of France is rendered abundantly more formidable by the failure of the attempt, which has been made to curb and reduce it, is a truth, alas! too obvious to be denied; and no one who has paid any attention to the character and the known projects of the man, who, unfortunately for the world, has the absolute direction of that power, can doubt that he will, more than ever, direct his attention, and devote his force, to the accomplishment of the object which is nearest his heart, and, in comparison, with which every other object is insignificant in his eyes—the utter destruction of this country. That we may the more promptly meet, and the more effectually counteract, his endeavours for the attainment of this object, it behoves us to consider by what means it is most likely to be pursued. Those means will be found to be reducible to three heads. The first I shall notice is, in its nature, the best calculated for success; but as it cannot succeed without our own fault, it is, I trust, the least

likely to be carried into effect. This country seems, at length, to be aware of the danger which is inseparable, under existing circumstances, from PACIFICATION with France It is no longer necessary to adduce arguments in support of a truth, which experience has so clearly and so incontrovertibly established—that while the ruler of France, is actuated by those views which so manifestly govern his whole conduct, and while his power, fully to realise those views, is susceptible of no effectual restraint but from the British arms, a regard for our own safety forbids us to think of peace. The dangers of war we may calculate, and we can face; but who can calculate, and how can we encounter, the dangers of pacification with such an enemy as Buonaparte? Of his arms, numberless are the proofs that we have no occasion to be afraid; but what means shall we have to baffle his treachery and his wiles, when we are no longer in a posture of defence? Or if, by little less than a miracle, we should be able to resist these his most formidable weapons, shall we, without better security than he is now willing to give, for an abandonment of that system of universal domination which he has hitherto invariably pursued, allow him to gratify his wish for ships, colonies and commerce?—Shall we, by affording him an oppor-

tunity of restoring that navy, the demolition of which almost consoles us for his continental triumphs, enable him again to face us upon our own element, where our superiority is still more decided than that which he possesses on land? Surely the departed hero, whose fall beclouded the brightest day of glory that ever shone upon this country, would start from his tomb to reproach the Englishman who should propose, for the sake of a precarious period of delusive and treacherous repose, to throw away this inestimable advantage, which he purchased with his life.

Should it be asked, are we then to wage eternal war? The answer is obvious—we must wage war so long as it is necessary for our defence. We are in a situation which admits only of a choice of evils. That war is an evil, and a grievous one too, is indisputable; but that peace, in the present state of things, would be a far greater evil, is a truth, which reason and experience combine to establish. To exchange war for peace, under such circumstances, would be an act of frenzy, deserving of the ruin, of which, in all human probability, it would be speedily productive.

The immortal name of Nelson cannot fail to remind us of the great increase of security which

the matchless victory of Trafalgar has afforded us against INVASION. This, and the other naval victories, which have crowned our arms during the short period of the present war, have deprived the enemy of all hope of supporting an attempt to invade us by a covering fleet, without which such an attempt would be little else than an effort of desperation, particularly as our maritime superiority is now so great as to give us a large disposable force to be employed in the defence of our shores. Let us beware, however, notwithstanding these advantages in our favour, of cherishing a doubt that the attempt at invasion, however desperate, will sooner or later be made. Let us be prepared, at all points, to repel it. Improbable as it may seem that the enemy, in spite of the many and apparently insurmountable obstacles that he must encounter at sea, should, at least, with any great force, effect a landing on our shores, let us be provided, in the best possible manner, against *that* event; and then, if we be sufficiently on our guard against his *wiles*, we shall have abundant reason to hope that he will be overwhelmed by the determined valour, and the invincible spirit, of the people of this country; who, well aware of the implacable malice by which he is actuated, and of the unutterable horrors which must inevitably at-

tend his success, would be eager, one and all, to expose their lives, not only to defeat the attack, but also to render that defeat so signal and so terrible, as to deter his barbarous legions from ever attempting a repetition of it.

There is yet another danger against which we must be on our guard, and from which, unless we meet it with extraordinary resolution, we have much more to apprehend than from either premature *pacification*, or actual *invasion*. The present is, indeed, a day of trial, of severer trial, whether we consider its probable duration, or the dark clouds with which it is overspread, than this country has ever experienced. We can as yet discover no end of our difficulties—we can anticipate no secure termination of the contest: but unless we resolutely maintain that contest until it be *securely* terminated; until a state of peace, instead of being attended with an increase of danger, will be less perilous than a state of war; until, in short, far brighter prospects open upon us; desolation, such as has not been hitherto known, at least in modern times, must be our lot. In such a situation, the danger to which we are most exposed, is that of being, at length, wearied out and disheartened, on finding, year after year, that notwithstanding all our exertions, and all our successes, we cannot catch any distinct views, however distant,

of a state of national repose and safety. On this subject I have already, on another occasion, presumed to warn my countrymen; and the case will justify a repetition of the warning, that, " unless it shall please Providence to give a great and sudden turn to public affairs, other virtues must be called into exercise, besides those which are now admirably displayed by this country. If we would ultimately preserve our native land from slavery; if, looking beyond the dangers of the moment, we would secure that national independence, for which the British People, like one man, have rushed into the field to meet the insulting foe; if we would place our wives and children beyond the reach of horrors, the very contemplation of which freezes our blood, but against which our drawn swords are now their only protection; if, in short, we would bequeath to our descendants any other portion than the most degrading subjection, and the most bitter wretchedness; to that patriotic spirit, to that martial ardour, which will render the history of the present moment one of the most brilliant in the records of this country, we must take care to superadd the less splendid, but not less indispensable, virtues, of *patience*, *perseverance*, and *fortitude*. We must not suffer ourselves to be wearied out by any length of contest; we must not be dis-

heartened by any failure of efforts; we must not be induced, by any temporary or partial success, to relax our exertions for permanent security; and what, after so long an enjoyment of prosperity, may be more difficult than all the rest, we must resolve cheerfully to submit to whatever privations so severe a struggle for all that is dear to us may render necessary. We must, in short, obtain that firmness and self-command, which alone can enable us to encounter those difficulties, and to endure those disappointments, which it may be our lot to experience, before we can again enjoy the sweets of repose*."

There is one quality in particular, the cultivation of which is of such importance in a contest like the present, that it ought not to be passed over without distinct notice. I mean a disposition to internal harmony, concord, and co-operation. Revolutionary France, whether in the form of an anarchical democracy, or in that of a Jacobinical Monarchy, from the first moment of our opposing her plans of universal disorganization, has invariably assimilated the contest between her and ourselves to that between Rome and Carthage: and by assigning to us, with insulting ferocity, the fate of the

* A View of the Moral State of Society at the Close of the 18th Century.

latter city, she has proved it to be her never ceasing object to involve us in total and remediless destruction. Lessons of profound wisdom may sometimes be learnt from an enemy; one of that description now presents itself to our attention, and our neglect of it will, perhaps, tend more than any thing else to enable our implacable foe to realise his insulting and sanguinary threat. The fall of Carthage was produced by intestine animosities and divisions. If we would escape a like fate, let us most studiously avoid the evils which in that case proved fatal. Let us cultivate that harmony, the want of which alone rendered Carthage unable to withstand the Roman legions. But, for that purpose, let us never forget that the Throne which we are defending against a power, that seeks the subversion of all *ancient* thrones, and the security of which involves all our hopes of preservation, is our natural—our only centre of union. And while we rally round this our constitutional standard, let us be careful not only to defend it against a foreign enemy, but to respect, to guard, and to maintain its prerogatives, by the aid of which alone it can co-operate with us for our mutual safety, and without which it would be but an empty pageant, unworthy our affection and solicitude.

It may be said, perhaps, that the recent his-

tory of this country contains a most brilliant and an unparalleled display of patience, perseverance, and fortitude; and that, although we have hitherto had no right to boast of domestic harmony, yet, at length, we may congratulate ourselves on account of the cordial unanimity with which we seem disposed to co-operate for our mutual preservation. Far be it from me, by adverting to the causes of those dissensions which have so long embarrassed our efforts and diminished our strength, to interrupt the harmony which at length so happily prevails among us, and which exhibits, in a manner highly honourable to those who sacrifice just resentment at the shrine of patriotism, the beneficial effects of a respectful and constitutional deference to the Royal Prerogative. But a love for my native soil, and for those who inhabit it, impels me to warn my countrymen that there is cause for the most serious apprehensions, lest their stock of patience, constancy, and fortitude should prove inadequate to the possible, nay, in all appearance, to the probable exigencies of a contest like the present. At all events, as the untimely failure of that stock, in such a contest, must be fatal to our existence as a nation, the cultivation of the *qualities* which are so essential to our safety should be the great object of our solicitude. We should cherish every

disposition, feeling and habit, which are favourable to their growth and vigour; remembering that whatever is adverse to their improvement tends to endanger the security of all that is dear and valuable in social life.

But it behoves us to be aware that the cultivation of the above qualities requires a domestic struggle scarcely less arduous than that which we have to maintain with the foreign enemy; a struggle with those luxurious habits which have gotten such fast hold of us, and than which nothing can be more hostile to that discipline of ourselves, which our actual situation so imperiously demands. There is something, however, in such habits, of so deceitful and captivating a nature, that the persons who are most subject to their influence, are always the most unwilling to make any effort to throw them off. Although luxury has proved the severest scourge ever known to the human race—although its ravages have far exceeded those of famine, pestilence, and the sword; nothing is so difficult as to prevail on mankind to regard it as an enemy. It possesses such powers of fascination as entirely to stop the ears of its votaries against the warning voice of history, which proclaims aloud, in tones the most clear and emphatical, the destruction of State after State, and of Empire after Empire, in its voracious gulph. It cannot, therefore, at any time

be unprofitable, and surely at the present time it cannot be unseasonable, to trace the operation of luxury, in corrupting the morals of individuals, and in producing the ruin of states.

That virtue requires a constant struggle with desire, until habits of self-government be firmly established, no one who is acquainted with human nature, or with his own heart, will deny. Surrounded as we are by external objects, which are incessantly inviting us to present gratification, and prompted by our own passions and appetites to listen to the invitation, much vigilance, resolution, and self-denial are necessary, to prevent our desires from gaining the mastery over us; and to preserve us, not only from indulgencies which are, in their nature, criminal, but also from such as become so, on account either of their being carried to excess, or of their interference with the duties of life. Every individual therefore, in order to be virtuous, is obliged to struggle even with his beneficial impulses; which, if uncontrouled, would deprive him of the power of self command, and thereby render him incapable of resisting temptations, to which he cannot yield without plunging himself into guilt and misery. To assist him in this struggle, he is endowed with a moral principle, the office of which is to impel to virtue, and to restrain from vice, by inspiring

a love of the former, and a hatred of the latter; and in conformity with an universal law of our nature, according to which, all our powers and faculties gather strength from exercise, this moral principle is vigorous, in proportion as it is called into action. It derives new force from every successful resistance of vicious inclination, until, at length, virtue becomes a habit. The difficulty is then surmounted; the contest is rendered easy; and the virtuous man, though always aware of the snares by which he is surrounded, and sensible of his own frailty, never discontinues his vigilance, yet so ardent is his affection for virtue, and so rooted his abhorrence of vice, that, provided he shun a state of confidence, he may be said to be almost in a state of security: and he enjoys, as the reward of all his efforts, "the soul's calm sun-shine, which is virtue's prize." On the other hand, in like manner, all our propensities grow stronger by indulgence; for in proportion as they are indulged, they meet with less resistance from the moral principle, which becomes languid and feeble for want of being called into exercise; while the love of pleasure is rendered craving and imperious by habitual gratification, until, at length, its dominion becomes absolute and uncontroulable.

If these observations, (notwithstanding

that they agree rather with the ancient than the modern philosophy of human nature) be just, what can be so conducive to vice as luxury, which consists, essentially, in an addictedness to pleasure—in an unrestrained indulgence of voluptuous inclination—and which, of course, puts an end to all struggle with desire, and extinguishes all power of self-denial, without which there can be no virtue? The mind which surrenders itself to so domineering an influence, instead of retaining its legitimate authority over the corporeal part, is itself subjected to the dominion of sense. Its moral principle, being never rouzed into efficacious action, becomes languid. Its faculties, being kept back from manly and vigorous exertion, are enfeebled. Its taste, being exercised chiefly on low and groveling objects, is vitiated. Its whole texture is relaxed and enervated. Accommodating itself, as it ever will do, to its ordinary occupations, it acquires a light and despicable frivolity. It grows more and more averse from thoughtfulness and reflection; it shuns the contemplation of subjects of real magnitude and importance; and it shrinks from "enterprises of great pith and moment." It becomes indifferent to those great and paramount interests, which involve all that is dear to social man; while it acquires an increased and a morbid sensibility for those nar-

row and sordid interests which are exclusively personal, but which are never secure, if the security of the former be precarious. In short, its whole frame and constitution are impaired; and although, for a while, it may yield only to indulgencies which it deems innocent, because in their nature legitimate, but which become vicious by excess, when, at length, it is allured by *illicit* gratification, it possesses neither the disposition nor the power to contend with the temptation, which, therefore, obtains an easy triumph over the feeble remains of virtue, that languishingly survive the formation of luxurious habits.

Thus does luxury disqualify the mind for those struggles, the success of which is of the very essence of virtue. Its effects on the heart are no less baneful. It not only palsies the moral sense, but it also extinguishes the sentiments, which alone can quicken that sense, and which are the very guardians and supporters of morality. Consisting entirely in personal gratification, it destroys the nature of man as a social being, by rendering his disposition sensual and selfish. It empties the heart of the social affections, by making it indifferent to every thing but the satisfaction of its voluptuous cravings. By the same operation it stifles the impulses of humanity, benevolence and patriotism; it chills and deadens even conjugal love and

parental fondness; it renders the pleasures of domestic life, which constitute the great charm of our present existence, tasteless, and even disgusting; and it consequently supersedes those domestic duties, on the assiduous and affectionate performance of which, are staked the hopes of the rising generation. Hence the most important part of education, that which has for its object to inspire an early sense of religion, and to form the heart and the disposition to the love and practice of virtue, is disregarded; and children deprived of that attentive and fostering care, to which Providence has committed the formation of their morals, imbibe, at their very homes, the first taint of vice, from the mercenaries to whom they are entrusted, and from the examples which are constantly before their eyes.

There is yet another avenue through which luxury corrupts the heart. Being unavoidably attended with great expense, it produces an inordinate desire of gain. Two feelings then engross the soul; an insatiable thirst for pleasure, and an equally insatiable desire of wealth. But the covetousness, which is excited by luxury, is of far more corrupting a nature than that, which is produced by a mere love of accumulation. The latter is so copiously fed by abstinence, self-denial, and personal austerity, that its chief anxiety

is rather for the preservation and security of the hoards which, by such means, it is perpetually amassing with astonishing increase, than for the acquisition of wealth by extraneous sources. Hence the miser, though dead to every generous feeling, though he defraud himself of all the innocent enjoyments of life, is often strictly just in his dealings with others. But luxurious extravagance can seldom be long supplied by what is honourably acquired. To satisfy the demands of ungovernable appetite, or to furnish the means of wasteful profusion, it is then found necessary to resort to other modes of acquisition; and the honest principle is easily vanquished, when it has to contend with a desire of providing for the uninterrupted enjoyment of pleasures, the least suspension of which cannot be contemplated without the most painful emotions. Hence it is, that he who is addicted to voluptuous indulgencies, is often, not only greedy and covetous, but unprincipled and fraudulent; that he who is *sui profusus*, generally becomes *alieni appetens;* and that a regard for his character is the only security, precarious as it is, on which those who have any dealings with him can rely, that he will not be guilty of the most base and iniquitous actions.

If such be the natural operation of luxury, whenever it gains an ascendency in the human mind, what must be its effects when it charac-

terizes the manners of society? Its natural fascination is then increased, in an almost inconceivable degree, by the tyranny of fashion, and the contagion of example. Instead of being liable to any restraint from the fear of shame, it receives a new impulse from the dread of singularity. Desires which, of themselves, are but too difficult to be controuled, are then inflamed by sympathy. A spirit of emulation goads on to the most ruinous excesses. Frugality, temperance, regularity, nay, even decency itself, are laughed out of countenance. A prevailing love of pleasure gradually swells into an universal rage for dissipation, and into an unbridled passion for public diversions, the immoderate enjoyment of which stamps the national character with levity and frivolity. Amusement, instead of being resorted to as a recreation, becomes the chief occupation of life; and whatever interrupts it is considered an unwelcome intruder. Business is procrastinated to the latest hour at which it can be performed, and it is then hastily dispatched, that it may interfere as little as possible with more agreeable pursuits. Nocturnal hours, being most grateful to the feverish thirst of dissipation, are stolen from that rest to which nature had allotted them, and an arrangement of time takes place which is unfavourable alike to corporeal, to intellectual, and to moral vigour.

The general manners become dissolute, licentious, and profligate. The ordinary habits of life abound with increased temptations to vice, which virtue, destitute of its native force, and deprived of all collateral aid, is unable to withstand. The same pernicious influence which destroys individual morality, extinguishes public principle, and public spirit. Hence a people, who are immersed in luxury, are ever found to be corrupt and venal. They are always ready to sacrifice general interests to personal advantages. Their patriotic feelings are quite absorbed in sensual indulgences. In an eagerness for present enjoyment, they lose all concern for futurity, all regard for posterity. They are willing to incur any danger rather than forego their accustomed gratifications. If it be their lot to enjoy civil freedom, they soon render themselves incapable of retaining that inestimable privilege: in proportion as they are, individually, unable to govern themselves, they are difficult, collectively, to be governed by those who have the rule over them. Slaves to their own passions and appetites, they are impatient of every other kind of restraint, and becoming untractable, restless, fond of change, turbulent, factious and seditious, they either plunge into anarchy, or oblige their government, for the sake of public order, or for its own pre-

servation, to assume despotical powers. But whether they have thus forfeited the blessings of liberty, or have always been strangers to those blessings, their sloth and supineness are sure, at length, to invite the attacks of external force. They are then inadequate to their own defence. Enervated by long and habitual indulgence, they are unfit to contend with difficulty, and appalled by the approach of danger: and dreading, above all things, the necessity of effort, and the pain of privation—distracted moreover in their councils, and irresolute in their measures—instead of availing themselves, promptly and efficaciously, of the means of preservation, which are still in their power, they seek to temporize and to conciliate; but, far from averting, they thereby accelerate their ruin; and they speedily furnish another proof, in addition to the many with which the history of the world abounds, that luxury, by subjecting a people to the dominion of pleasure, and the corruption of vice, prepares them to become an easy prey to the attacks of a foreign enemy.

Though there are, happily, indisputable proofs in this country that we are far from being arrived at this deplorable state of effeminacy and imbecility, many of the symptoms above described unequivocally indicate our approach toward such a state. The bent of the times is

altogether to pleasure and dissipation. Voluptuous gratification and public amusements are the grand objects of general solicitude. Thanks to the manly character and qualities we have inherited from our less luxurious ancestors—thanks, too, to the invigorating efforts we have been compelled to make for our own preservation—we are not yet enervated. But luxury, the natural cause of effeminacy, the inveterate foe to virtue, happiness and social security, has established its dominion among us. Its debasing influence has increased, in our own time, in a most alarming degree, and it is still increasing, spite of the counteracting pressure of war. Its effects are awfully visible. It has relaxed our morals and corrupted our manners. It has utterly banished frugality and self-denial: it has superseded domestic habits and domestic duties. It has produced an excessive fondness in all ranks of people for public diversions, which have been so much multiplied of late as to denote, in a striking manner, the rapidly increasing frivolity of the age.* By making us sensual

* Among the many proofs of this fact, it may deserve particular notice that, within a few years, several places of entertainment in the metropolis, which were originally allotted to the display of feats of horsemanship, have been suffered to grow up into theatrical exhibitions. It has also become a custom, in almost every village of any note in the neighbourhood of the Capital, to establish Fairs, which, though nuisances of the

and selfish it has made us venal and corrupt. It has not merely taken possession of an immensely overgrown and a crowded metropolis, the natural seat of its empire, but it has also penetrated to the retreats of rural life, and produced a fearful revolution in the manners of the farm. It is not confined to the higher and middle classes, nor even to the gay circles of fashionable life, but has extended itself to the lowest orders of society; which have not only much enlarged their sphere of gratification, but are become so destitute of self-command, that an occasional scarcity of their chief article of subsistence, although substitutes be so liberally provided as to preclude all fear of want, is sure to be attended with the most serious danger to public order and tranquillity. Among such of those classes as are engaged in handicraft occupations, it has, in consequence of excessive wages, (the greatest curse that can befal the labourer,) assumed the form of gross debauchery. Not even the rising generation has escaped its all-pervading

worst description to the whole neighbourhood, are connived at, under the specious pretence of affording amusement to the lower orders, but which are, in fact, injurious, in the highest degree, to persons in that rank of life—by plunging them in riot and debauchery; by injuring their health and their circumstances; by distressing their families; and, what is worst of all, by exposing the female part of them to seduction and prostitution.

influence. The manners of the British youth, especially in the great seminaries of education, the nurseries of future statesmen and legislators, are deeply infected with the contagion, so fatal to those habits of industry, temperance and self-government, which are now more than ever wanted to resist the temptations of a voluptuous age.

So luxurious a state of manners would, at any time, be a just cause of most serious alarm to every one who is susceptible of patriotic feelings, because, according to the evidence of all history, it denotes the approach of such deep corruption, of such complete depravity, as have never failed, even in the most powerful empires, to prove the precursors of national ruin. At the present crisis it is calculated to inspire, not merely alarm, but terror; because it is incompatible with the cultivation of qualities which are now essential to our national safety. How, if we yield ourselves to the dominion of enervating pleasure, shall we acquire that firmness and constancy, which are so necessary to enable us to persevere in the present arduous contest, until it can be brought to a *safe*, or, what is precisely the same thing, to an honourable termination? How, if we make our happiness to consist in voluptuous gratification, shall we cheerfully submit to whatever sacrifices and

privations, the protraction of such a contest may render indispensable? How, in short, shall we be disposed, for the sake of our country, to endure the burdens and the hardships which we may be called upon to sustain, if we want the resolution to refrain from indulgencies, which are destructive to our own best interests, and incompatible with the duties that we owe to our dearest connections? If, therefore, we would qualify ourselves for the warfare, which, unless we trust our existence as a nation to the forbearance, the justice, and the fidelity of such an enemy as Buonaparte, we must continue to wage, until either the diminution of his power, or some other most unexpected change, may authorise us to hope for security in peace—if we would attain that vigour, mental and corporeal, that patience, firmness, constancy, and fortitude of which we are likely to stand in such urgent need—let us deliver ourselves from the enervating influence of luxury; let us assert the supremacy of mind over body; let us vindicate the authority of reason and virtue over sense, appetite, and passion; let us, in fine, resume the command of ourselves, and steadily practise the resolution and self-denial which are necessary to prevent our sensual and selfish desires from subjecting us to their tyrannical sway: we shall thereby render the contest, how-

ever arduous, comparatively easy; we shall infuse energy into our hearts, and vigour into our efforts; and we shall deprive our implacable enemy of his best chance of effecting our ruin, that of being able to exhaust our patience, and to weary us out by the duration of an apparently interminable conflict.

As an encouragement to us to pursue so wise and manly a course, and one so congenial with the British character, we have reason to hope that the terrific system which our foe seems to have consolidated, with a view to universal dominion, is not, in its nature, calculated for duration. It possesses no qualities that are likely to give it stability or permanence. It carries in its bosom the seeds of its own dissolution. If, indeed, we yield to it, it will soon effect our fall, and thereby consummate the general ruin to which it tends. But if we continue manfully to resist it; if, availing ourselves of the incalculable advantages which we derive from our maritime superiority, we follow up the blow by which we have nearly annihilated the hostile navies opposed to us; if we cherish that high spirit, which such a superiority on our natural element ought to infuse into our breasts; if we assert those lofty pretensions which, with such an advantage in our favour, it would be dastardly in us not to oppose to the insulting

arrogance of the foe, or to the fraudulent and insidious hostility of those who, under the mask of neutrality, are virtually his allies; we shall then be authorized to hope that the storm, though it may, for a time, continue to rage with increasing fury, will, at length, subside, and that we shall then be indebted, under Providence, to our firmness, not only for our own preservation, but, perhaps, also for an opportunity of restoring to our continental neighbours that security, which dear-bought experience, in confirmation of the sage maxims of our ancestors, has proved to be essential to our own.

It ought not, however, in a discussion like the present, to escape notice, that at all times, whether prosperous or adverse, there are to be found persons, who, deeming luxury to be essential to the wealth and prosperity of great and powerful nations, treat with contempt and ridicule every one that complains of its ascendancy, and who represent all the lamentations to which it has ever given occasion, as mere idle declamation, or rather as the wild effusions of a blind and mischievous fanaticism; nay, some of them have gone the length of contending that the very vices which a luxurious state of manners cannot fail to produce, are essential to the well being of society. But whoever examines the reasoning to which such persons resort,

when they condescend to support their opinions by argument, will find that it consists of a flimsy tissue of such gross and palpable fallacies, that to be deceived by them is a disgrace to the human understanding. Their hypothesis is generally built upon the assumption, that the object of what is called declamation against luxury, is to deprive mankind of whatever, according to the most rigid definition, can be called by that name; to reduce them to a bare compliance with the absolute and indispensable demands of nature; and, by inevitable consequence, to cut off all the sources of commercial and financial prosperity. But whoever should propose so wild a scheme of reform, would deserve to be denominated a madman rather than a moralist. Do the manners of society admit of no other alternative than either savage simplicity and ascetic austerity, or that unbounded voluptuousness, which renders the mind effeminate, the heart corrupt, and the character frivolous? Because the former extreme would, as I admit it would, involve the dissolution of a wealthy state, does it follow that the latter is fraught with no mischief to a community? Between these extremes there certainly exists a happy medium, which is denominated *virtue*, and the recommendation of which is the real object of those *declaimers* against luxury, who, taking their stand on the

broad and solid ground of experience, venture sometimes to warn their fellow creatures of a precipice which they are blindly approaching, and at the bottom of which lie the ruins of the greatest empires that have ever flourished in the world. The virtue, however, which the votaries of pleasure—the devotees of sensuality—are thus counselled to practise, far from being that harsh, monkish, and impolitic system which those, who seek an excuse for their neglect of it, represent it to be, will be found upon examination to be perfectly applicable to social life, in its most polished and refined, as well as in its most simple state. It is a system of salutary regulation, requiring always self-government, often self-denial, but never unnecessary and useless mortification. It imposes no restraints but such as are salutary. It is alike remote from sordid avarice and from ruinous prodigality. It not only permits but prescribes whatever is suitable to rank, condition, and circumstance. Its spirit would be violated if opulence were not to diffuse itself in the regular channels of liberal expenditure; or if high station were to lay aside that splendour and magnificence which are its proper appendages, and without which it would lose its respectability in the eyes of the world. It wages war with none of the comforts of life, but authorizes the enjoyment of them all,

in their due place and degree: nay, far from being a foe to what is usually termed pleasure, virtue is necessary to secure to it the power of pleasing—both by restraining those excesses which not only cause it to end in pain, but which make it to pall and to cloy in the very moment of fruition—and by directing it to its true design, that of relieving the mind by occasional relaxation, and of thereby giving it a new spring for the cheerful performance of the duties, which constitute the main business of life.

Such is the real nature of that virtue which the rational moralist recommends to the votaries of luxury, but from which the latter most *patriotrically* abstain, alledging that it would be injurious to the resources of a great and powerful nation. But surely it would rather tend to preserve those resources in a healthy and flourishing state. For while it allows ample scope for the consumption of all the necessaries and conveniencies of life, it stimulates to the exertion of honest industry, and it thereby promotes the increase of productive labour, which is the great fund of national wealth and prosperity. It encourages the skill and ingenuity which are employed in augmenting that fund, and it smiles upon arts, manufactures, and commerce. In a word, it favours those habits of regularity and diligence, of sobriety and temperance, which,

by promoting the prosperity of individuals, are necessarily conducive to the general welfare.

On the other hand, it deserves to be remarked that those who assert that a country, in a state of high civilization, instead of receiving sufficient nourishment from the refreshing dews and showers of heaven, must, in order to be preserved from barrenness, be inundated and impregnated by the overflowings of luxury—are obliged to contend that the welfare of individuals and that of the community are at variance with each other. For they do not venture, in the teeth of every day's sad experience, to deny, that excessive luxury is fraught with the most mischievous effects on all who surrender themselves to its influence. They, therefore, in effect, maintain that the whole is benefited by what is injurious to its constituent parts;—and that a state thrives best when its inhabitants are addicted to habits of life, which tend to debase and enervate their minds; to corrupt their hearts; to enfeeble their bodies; to injure their circumstances; to extinguish in them all public spirit and private principle; to make them selfish and venal; to dispose them, if in spite of their sloth and extravagance, they be prosperous and wealthy, to defraud the public revenue; or (which is more likely to happen) by involving them in bankruptcy and indigence, to disable them from paying their share

of the public taxes; to make them, in short, burdens to the community and pests to society, and to bring countless numbers of them to a premature grave. Such, with regard to individuals, is the natural operation of causes, which, according to the advocates for unrestrained luxury, are essential to national wealth and prosperity.

In order, however, to give to their hypothesis, fraught as it is with absurdity, some colour of reason, those advocates resort chiefly to two topics. First, they urge, that it is impossible for perfect virtue to exist in society, and that luxury and vice are inseparable from wealthy and flourishing states. This is undoubtedly true; but does it follow that because human society cannot be perfectly virtuous, its prosperity and happiness are not promoted by virtue? or that, because wealthy and flourishing states are ever the most luxurious and vicious, such states are really benefited by luxury and vice? As well might it be contended that, because the human body cannot attain a perfect exemption from disease—and because, when most hale and robust, it is most liable to those maladies which are attended with the greatest violence—therefore disease is conducive to its vigour, and essential to its longevity; or that the life of man is most secure when the fever rages in his veins, and threatens

him with speedy dissolution. The truth is, that health is not more favourable to the prolongation of human life, than virtue to the strength and duration of states. And if the progress of great and powerful empires, now no more, be traced from their origin, it will be found that they were indebted for their greatness chiefly to the influence of the virtues which they possessed in their infant state, and the decay of which was the operative cause of their decline and fall.

A celebrated writer, or, to describe him more accurately, a most able and illustrious champion of revealed religion, had far juster notions of the real interests of society, than those absurd *declaimers*, for such they really are, who think it is rendered great and powerful by its luxury and its vices: and his sentiments on this subject are particularly deserving of attention, at a time, when our very existence as a nation seems to depend upon the prompt and vigorous application of the means, which are really best calculated to promote our national strength, and to enable us vigorously to maintain a contest with the most formidable foe we have ever had to encounter.

" The tendencies of virtue and vice," says the profound Butler, " are obvious with regard to *individuals*. But it may require more particularly to be considered, that power in a *Society*, by being under the direction of virtue, naturally

increases, and has a necessary tendency to prevail over opposite power, not under the direction of it; in like manner as power, by being under the direction of reason, increases, and has a tendency to prevail over brute force."

"Now I say, virtue in Society has a like tendency to procure superiority and additional power: whether this power be considered as the means of security from opposite power, or of obtaining other advantages. And it has this tendency, by rendering public good an object and end, to every member of the Society; by putting every one upon consideration and diligence, recollection and self-government, both in order to see what is the most effectual method, and also in order to perform their proper part, for obtaining and preserving it; by uniting a Society within itself, and so increasing its strength; and, which is particularly to be mentioned, uniting it by means of veracity and justice. For as these last are principal bonds of union, so benevolence or public spirit, undirected, unrestrained by them, is, nobody knows what."

"For, much less, very much less, power under the direction of virtue, would prevail over much greater not under the direction of it."

"For virtue, from the very nature of it, is a principle and bond of union, in some degree, amongst all who are endued with it, and known

to each other; so as that by it, a good man cannot but recommend himself to the favour and protection of all virtuous beings, throughout the whole universe, who can be acquainted with his character, and can interpose in his behalf in any part of his duration."

"For, cunning and false self-interest, confederacies in injustice—ever slight and accompanied with faction and intestine treachery—these, on one hand, would be found mere childish folly and weakness, when set in opposition against wisdom, public spirit, union inviolable, and fidelity, on the other; allowing both a sufficient length of years to try their force."*

Another argument which is usually resorted to by those who contend that luxurious excesses are beneficial to states is, that such excesses are favourable to the public revenue. It is true, luxury is a productive source of revenue; but the statesman who, conceiving that its moral mischiefs are compensated by its financial advantages, should cherish and promote it with a view to the supplies it may be made to produce, would be guilty of a fatal error, even with regard to finance. For while it pours large sums into the treasury, to meet the demands of the passing year, it tends to exhaust the perennial springs,

* The Analogy of Religion, natural and revealed, to the constitution and course of nature.

which can alone be depended upon for permanent supplies. It is injurious to that productive industry which is the real source of the wealth and power of nations. The financier, therefore, who, for the sake of the revenues of a country, should encourage those habits of luxury which are hurtful to its morals, would sacrifice its vital interests to its temporary exigencies; and, in point of folly, might justly be compared with the man, whose impatience for supplies led him to kill the goose, that daily presented him with a golden egg; or with the savages who cut down a tree, in order the more easily and expeditiously to gather its fruit.

There is yet a higher view to be taken of our situation, as connected with the important consideration of *national safety*, than any which has hitherto attracted our notice; and which must not, in justice to that most interesting subject, be passed over in silence. The events which, during the last fifteen years, have crouded the history of the European world, are of so astonishing a nature, of so awful a magnitude, and of so portentous an aspect; their accomplishment has so completely violated all probability, and baffled all calculation; they are, in short, so remote from the ordinary and natural course of human affairs; that the reflecting mind is utterly at a loss to account for them on any other supposition,

than that they have been brought about by the special and extraordinary interposition of the Almighty Ruler of the universe. That He who created all things by the word of His power, can make them conduce to the purposes of His will, is a proposition which no one, it is presumed, will dispute. That this Almighty Being, besides exerting a constantly over-ruling influence, whereby He renders even the passions and the crimes of men subservient to His great designs,* does sometimes interfere, in a special and extraordinary manner, and by a more direct, though, for the time, an invisible agency, in the affairs of the world, is a truth which cannot be controverted without an entire rejection of the authority of the Holy Scriptures. The most frequent object of such especial interference, as we are explicitly informed by those sacred records, is to inflict punishment on communities for great and extraordinary wickedness. Without, indeed, the light derived from so high a source, reason would lead us to conclude, that all vice, being a violation of the Divine commands, must necessarily excite the Divine displeasure; that in proportion as those commands are clearly and explicitly promulgated, a disre-

* See this truth admirably illustrated in Mrs. More's excellent work, entitled, Hints towards forming the Character of a young Princess; Chapters 38 and 39.

gard to them must be offensive to Him from whom they proceed; and that, when large portions of mankind, in defiance of a full and explicit communication of the Divine will, sink into that state of deep and desperate depravity, which seems to exclude all prospect of amendment by ordinary means; they may then expect some extraordinary visitation from Heaven, either for their own sakes, to rouze them to repentance and reformation, or else, by the terror of their punishment, to deter others from following their example. All this, I say, would be perfectly analogous to sound reason, even if it were not so clearly proved by revelation to be frequently the course pursued by Providence, in the moral government of the world.

If the tremendous convulsions by which Europe has been so long agitated, be, as their extraordinary nature and awful tendency afford such abundant reason to conclude, the effect of the Divine displeasure, it cannot be difficult to find the cause of that displeasure, in the progress of infidelity, impiety and vice, especially during the period of the last fifty years. Whoever contemplates the great apostacy which has taken place in the very heart of Christendom—an apostacy which extends itself even to the Professors of Theology in the principal universities of the North of Europe; whoever reflects on the immo-

ral systems which, under the name of philosophy, have been widely disseminated, with most alarming effect, for the purpose of eradicating from the human mind every sentiment of religion, every principle of virtue, and every feeling of nature; whoever considers the licentious and profligate state of morals in which the European continent, especially, is plunged; whoever, I say, takes these things into consideration, might well tremble, even if no symptoms of an alarming nature had yet appeared, lest the wrath of Heaven should be speedily manifested, in signal vengeance, for such daring contempts of its authority, aggravated as they are by such gross ingratitude, for its long and distinguished kindness to this highly favoured quarter of the globe.

In thus accounting for calamities, which are without a parallel in modern times, it is impossible not to notice a striking circumstance, not unfrequently to be found in those awful dispensations of Providence, whereby extraordinary guilt is requited with punishment of too solemn and exemplary a nature, to be attributed to the ordinary operation of human causes. The most guilty and depraved of the continental nations has been selected as the scourge of the rest. This distinction, however, denotes no favour to profligate France, which, even in the midst of its successes, has already experienced suffer-

ings, hitherto unequalled by those of any other nation. But its agency is not expired—its work is not accomplished. It, therefore, though itself enslaved—though pressed down by the galling yoke of a ferocious usurper—goes on conquering, and, perhaps, still to conquer; little thinking, that the very triumphs in which it glories, besides rivetting its own chains, may ultimately prove the means of still severer punishment to itself, than any which it has been the instrument of inflicting on neighbouring countries.

The peculiar circumstances of our own case afford a strong confirmation to the reasoning by which I have ventured to account for the present most disastrous and alarming situation of the civilized world. According to the principle of that reasoning, the religious and moral state of Great Britain will be found to correspond, in a most remarkable manner, with its political state; that is, with its wonderful preservation, hitherto, from that ruin in which so many great and powerful nations have been involved; and with the deep and incalculable interest which it, nevertheless, possesses in the misfortunes of Europe. For not only is this country far less depraved than its neighbours on the continent, but it still retains a portion of religious and moral excellence, which, if seasonably called forth into active exertion, is capable of prov-

ing the means of our reformation. To this difference between ourselves and the people of other Christian countries, may we not, without presumption, ascribe our preservation, *thus far*, from the calamities with which, more or less, almost every other nation has been visited?

Let us not, however, deceive or flatter ourselves. Although our comparative state, in regard to religion and morals, be so much in our favour, it cannot be denied that we have abundant cause to dread the Divine displeasure, on account of the impiety and the immorality which prevail among us. Instead, therefore, of attributing our escape from the calamities which have befallen other nations, to any distinguishing merits of our own, let us rather consider those calamities as a merciful warning to us, with which indeed, we should not have been indulged, unless we had been better than our neighbours, but which proclaims aloud in our ears, that "unless we repent, we shall all likewise perish." It may, perhaps, be said, that complaints, similar to those which are now urged, might be brought against this country at every period of its history. It is true; we have at all times had abundant reason to be thankful for the Divine forbearance, in not dealing with us according to our deserts. But the feature which distinguishes the present times, and which is chiefly calculated to awaken our

fears, is deep and still progressive depravity. Whoever has attained the middle age of life, must be sensible that a change, much for the worse, has taken place within the period of his recollection, in the manners and the morals of this country: and if the nature of this change be considered, together with the causes from which it proceeds, and the consequences to which it obviously tends, it will be found to be precisely that which indicates the approach of general and incurable corruption, and which, even in the ordinary course of things, leads to the downfall and dissolution of states. The vices, indeed, which characterize the present times, do not much excite the alarm of common and superficial observers, because they do not display that ferocity which is usually attendant on a ruder state of society. Instead of breaking out into violence, outrage and rapine, they lull our fears—nay, they often demand to be admitted in evidence of an improved state of morals—because they are accompanied with a sensible increase of gentleness and refinement; or, to use the more appropriate phraseology of modern times, of liberality and moderation. They also plead, as a further claim to our favour, that they are free from that grossness which was the character of some former periods; and in support of this additional claim, it is frequently

observed, that language which was formerly current on the stage would not now be there tolerated.

But upon a closer inspection it will be found, that the external polish which we have received serves only to cover a fouler mass of internal pollution; nay, that our refinement in manners, which is so much insisted on as denoting an improvement in morals—having been, in a great degree at least, the effect of luxury—and being accompanied, as it certainly is, with a relaxation of moral principle—has really contributed to the progress of vice, by concealing its deformity, until at length, instead of turning from it with disgust, we are induced to regard it with complacency, and even to plead in its favour. Thus, though our taste has become more pure, and our language more chaste, our hearts are grown more corrupt: and vice, by assuming a bland and courteous demeanour; by making some apparent sacrifices to decency; and by cautiously refraining from shocking that moral sense, which is never to be entirely extinguished; has acquired a far wider diffusion, and has more deeply infected the mass of society, than it could possibly have done had it continued to exhibit that "frightful mien," by which it naturally excites our horror, and which, "to be hated needs but

to be seen*." That the most polished nations may be the most corrupt, is a truth which was

* The present time abounds with proofs that even our claim to refinement must be received with much qualification, or, rather, that this flimsy veil to our vices is about to be entirely withdrawn; for, in some instances, it must be admitted that we display a grossness of manners which would have disgraced the most barbarous ages. While our females are ready to take offence at the least coarseness of expression, do they not, themselves, by their modes of dress, set decency itself at defiance? While our stage refrains from impurity of language, do not our theatres, in other parts, abound with scenes and with language which render them an improper resort for modest women? Nay, has not the stage itself, on a memorable occasion, proved that nothing but the controul, to which happily it is subject, prevents it from exhibiting spectacles, infinitely more gross than any language that ever proceeded from it? On the occasion here alluded to, a female performer at the Opera House, in a representation of the Elysian Fields, exposed her person in a manner, which she might think *precisely* suited to the character she sustained, but which was thus described by a young gentleman from Oxford.—" You will be surprized to hear that I was at the Opera the other night, for the first time in my life; and you will be still more surprized when I tell you, that it shall be the last, unless necessity drive me thither; for, had I not seen it with my eyes, I could never have believed that an English audience would have suffered itself to be insulted by such disgusting indecency; *neither could I have believed that so much depravity existed in this kingdom.*" Such, indeed, was this outrage to decency, that the Lord Chamberlain, on being informed of it, interposed his authority with the Manager to prevent its being repeated; but, to the disgrace of our national character, *it was endured without any visible marks of disapprobation, by an assemblage of the highest rank and fashion in the*

formerly exemplified by Athens, and which has been confirmed, in modern times, by a neigh-

Country!!! Another proof of modern grossness is to be found at those places of fashionable resort, called watering places, where dissipation, when obliged, by the sultry season, to quit the principal seat of her empire, continues her reign, without allowing any interval, during the whole year, for retirement and reflection. At these thronged receptacles of indolence and frivolity, where nothing grave or useful can disturb the vapid hum of pleasure, the practice of indecent bathing has, within a few years, become extremely prevalent. On this practice, as it shockingly exists at Brighton, the following observations were made by a gentleman, who published a little tract on the subject*, and who there asserts, that "he observed, every morning while he was there, men of all descriptions bathing directly under the windows of the Marine Parade, which is the most public and frequented street in the town; and so familiarized had the female spectators become to this scene, from which, *a few years ago*, they would have retired in haste and confusion, that it neither drove them from their windows, nor prevented them from parading the Cliff, which exposed them to so indelicate a view."—An apology would be due to the reader, for adverting to these most disgusting topics, if it were not impossible, without some notice of them, to judge rightly of the genuineness of those claims to delicacy and refinement which the present age is so forward to advance. If further proof were wanting of the gross profligacy of our manners, it would be found in the proceedings of our criminal courts, which are frequently employed on cases of so shocking a nature to be unfit to be reported to the public. There is, indeed, just cause to fear, lest our administration of justice, pure as it is in itself, should, on account of the

* Observations on Indecent Sea Bathing, as practised at different Watering-Places on the Coast of this Kingdom.—Published by Hatchard.

bouring people, an imitation of whose manners, and an adoption of whose fashions, have contributed more than we are aware, to our own corruption. And it is but too evident that the change which has taken place in us, and to which is vauntingly, but most deceptiously, applied the cant term of refinement, is really an approximation, though, thank Heaven! not as yet a very close one, to the moral state of this people, before their vices had plunged them in revolution and anarchy. Perhaps it may be impossible more accurately to describe our moral character, than by representing us in that middle and most critical state which retains so much goodness as to be capable of reformation; while it is so fast verging to complete depravity, as to afford just reason to fear that it will soon be too bad to be corrected, except by a miracle.

If this be but a tolerably correct statement, it is plain that we should not have a moment to lose in beginning the great work of reformation, even though the extraordinary circumstances of the times did not call upon us instantly to set about that work, as the only means of averting that Divine vengeance, which we have

foulness of the transactions which are brought before it, serve rather to injure than to improve those sentiments, the corruption of which denotes the last stage of depravity.

so much reason to dread, and of obtaining the aid of that all-powerful arm, of which, in our present difficulties, we stand in such need. For supposing, notwithstanding the many appearances to the contrary, the late awful convulsions and vicissitudes to have been produced in the ordinary course of human affairs, and without any special interposition of Heaven, still reformation would be the wisest course we could pursue, with a view to our escape from the ruin which seems to impend over us; since nothing would conduce so much, as our moral improvement, to our national strength and security. For, as has been already shewn, the love and practice of virtue tend invariably to promote that union and harmony, and those dispositions and habits, which constitute the real strength and the stability of states. In a word, both reason and experience confirm, in the fullest and clearest manner, the important truth inculcated by higher authority, that "righteousness exalteth a nation."

But far from every British bosom be the heart-chilling thought, alike impious and absurd, that the Being who, while he has displayed His stupendous power in the creation of numberless more worlds than the eye can reach, has also extended His fatherly care to the minutest works of nature—who regularly carries on, from year to year, and from age to age, not only the har-

monious movements of the heavenly orbs, but also the astonishing and infinitely diversified processes, by which animal and vegetable life is sustained in innumerable creatures—and who is still more fully and clearly made known to us by His love of virtue, and by His detestation of vice, than even by the wonders of creation—far, I say, from every British bosom be the heart-chilling thought, that this great and beneficent Being takes so little concern in the moral government of the world, that He neither superintends the progress, nor will direct the result, of such a revolution as that which we have recently witnessed: a revolution which has deluged Europe with blood, overwhelmed vast and mighty empires, and convulsed to its foundations the whole fabric of civilized society; and which menaces with ruin whatever has hitherto escaped its desolating fury. Such a thought might, indeed, have suited the meridian of atheistical France; but surely it can never be entertained in this Christian country. It would subject us to the merited reproaches of our naval heroes, who, in the moment of victory, never fail to discover a Divine hand, controuling the fury of the battle, and crowning their efforts with success. It would be at variance with all our notions, feelings, and habits; with our systems of education and our systems of worship; and it would contradict the whole tenor of

that public homage which we are accustomed to offer to Almighty God. It would convert into a solemn mockery those devout solemnities, by which, during the dangers and calamities of war, we are occasionally enjoined, by Royal authority, to seek, with humiliation, fasting, and repentance, the Divine favour and protection; and which, though deplorably deficient in producing any salutary effect on our lives and manners, are, nevertheless, a public, and it cannot be doubted, a sincere recognition of the doctrine, that the Creator of the world is also the Sovereign Disposer of events; and that while it is in the course of His Providence to chastise nations for their sins, it is also in *their* power to conciliate His favour, by penitence and reformation.

But how, in so corrupt an age, and in so depraved a state of manners, is that national reformation, which, in every point of view, is so desirable; which, whatever be the causes that have brought us into our present most perilous situation, affords us the only sure means of averting that destruction, in which it is the invariable object of our implacable enemy to involve us; how, I say, is such a reformation to be effected? It is a trite observation, which is often applied to this most interesting subject—*let every one mend one, and all will be right.* This is indeed a truism; but

it is utterly useless with regard to any practical effect, or to any beneficial tendency. Such is the proneness of human nature to evil, and such the obstinate inveteracy of bad habits, that, when the character of any individual is become depraved, there is but little chance of his amendment by the operation of internal causes; or, in other words, of his reforming himself. On the contrary, the longer he continues in a vicious course, the more confirmed are his vicious propensities, until, at length, he loses both the disposition and the power to contend with them. To rouse him even to thoughtfulness and consideration, from which the vicious are ever most averse, and without which the very groundwork of reformation cannot be laid, some powerful *external* influence is, therefore, necessary. But where is that influence to be found, and by whom is it to be exercised? Happily, it is abundantly provided for by means arising out of the nature of man and of society, and the great difficulty consists in bringing those means into action. Society is a state of contest between virtue and vice, or, to speak with more precision, between the persons who are respectively engaged in those opposite interests. On the activity with which the friends of virtue exert themselves in that contest, it principally depends whether the morals of a community, which are never stationary, be in a state of melioration or

deterioration. But as mankind become more depraved, the number of such persons decreases, and those who remain grow torpid and disinclined to active exertion; while those of an opposite description are, not only more numerous, but less susceptible of any salutary influence: thus the difficulty of reformation increases until it becomes at length a hopeless task.

It has been already stated that there still exists in this country a portion of religion and virtue, sufficient, if called into action in a manner suited to the exigency of the case, to accomplish the most desirable object of national reformation. But the obstacles it has to encounter in pursuit of that object are, it must be acknowledged, in the highest degree discouraging. It is of the first importance that those who are disposed to enter into a vigorous contest with vice, should be fully apprized of those difficulties, since, otherwise, whatever ardour they may bring into the conflict, they cannot be expected to persevere in it with that resolution, which will be necessary to crown their efforts with success. At this time it particularly behoves them to be aware that the principal difficulty, in the great work of reformation, arises from the luxurious manners of the age, than which nothing can be more unfavourable to reform. For, by the prevalence of such manners, not only are the vicious imbued with the deep-

est taint of depravity, but the virtuous are rendered incompetent for manly and strenuous exertion. Persons of the latter description, by associating with a luxurious world, though they may not be prevailed upon to sacrifice their principles, become languid in their zeal, and feeble in their efforts, in the cause of virtue. The habits of increased indulgence which universally obtain, and the unnatural arrangement of time which grows, unavoidably, out of such habits, relax their vigour, both of mind and body, and indispose them for any exertion that is not absolutely *indispensable*. Should they be prevailed upon to engage in any attempt to check the progress of vice, they are soon disheartened by the impediments which they find in their way, and are ready to avail themselves of any excuse for abandoning a pursuit, which can be rendered successful only by steadiness, perseverance, and unremitting activity: and, in their co-operation with others of congenial minds, their usefulness is impeded in a degree, of which actual observation can alone furnish an adequate notion, by the want of that punctuality to engagements, which, in more simple, and less slothful times, was justly deemed a moral duty, even in the ordinary affairs of life. Thus is the lukewarmness of the good no less unfavourable to reformation, than the profligacy of the bad.

As an encouragement, however, to the friends

of virtue, resolutely to face the difficulties which are opposed to them in a contest with vice, they should remember that, independently of the main object of such a contest—the reformation of the vicious, and the consequent amelioration of society—virtue itself is invigorated by every effort to promote its own interests. No such effort, therefore, can be thrown away; for if it do not succeed in amending those, for whose advantage it is intended, it must benefit those by whom it is made. It must augment the stock of virtue, if it fail to diminish the mass of vice.

It has been shewn that a general reformation can be effected only by the action of the good part of society upon the bad. It is, therefore, of great importance to ascertain in what that action consists; or, in other words, by what means the friends of virtue have it in their power to exercise a salutary influence, upon the minds and conduct of persons of a different description.

The most general and obvious of those means, is the powerfully attractive force of good example, which has an invariable tendency to excite men to the love and practice of virtue. The desire of happiness, which is the universal principle of action in the human breast, impels mankind to esteem those who evidently contribute to the general felicity. Now the

connection between virtue and happiness is so manifest, and the former tends so directly and so invariably to promote the latter, both in individuals and communities, that none but the most abandoned can withhold their admiration from the truly virtuous character; while the captivating model displayed by such a character is wonderfully calculated, by means of the fascinating charm of imitation, not only to reclaim the vicious, but also to animate and assist the virtuous in their struggles with temptation. If such be the beneficial tendency of good example, what imperious motives are suggested by the present awful state of the world, to induce every one, who considers himself enlisted in the cause of virtue, to be more than ordinarily attentive to his deportment? It ought not to satisfy him that his conduct is correct, that it is free from every thing which can have an injurious tendency; he ought to endeavour, to the utmost of his power, to render it *exemplary*, that it may have the effect of alluring others to the practice of every religious and moral duty. But, for that purpose, he must be careful not to forget that, without humility and meekness, the brightest examples, though they excite admiration, will ever fail to produce imitation. These qualities are, indeed, the very key-stone of virtue, without which, besides being altogether defective as a model, it must also be de-

void of strength and stability; insomuch that the good, when destitute of such qualities, (if, indeed, goodness can exist without them) not only lose all their influence upon the bad, but are destitute of coherence and harmony among themselves; nay, they are even repulsive to one another, and, consequently, incapable of mutual cooperation in the cause which, individually, they endeavour to serve.

Another beneficial influence, which the virtuous have it in their power to exercise upon those who have been seduced into the paths of vice, consists in the persuasive force of admonition. Nothing is better calculated to engage the attention of the human mind, or to excite a lively interest in the human heart, than an earnest solicitude for the happiness of others; and when it is evident that exhortations to virtue are prompted by such solicitude, the character must be indeed depraved, on which, if seasonable and judicious, they have no effect. And as there is scarcely any one, however low his station, or contracted his sphere of action, who does not derive, either from family connection, or social intimacy, sufficient weight with some individuals, to enable him to administer to them good counsel with a reasonable prospect of success, the benefit that may be rendered to society by the judicious use of this salutary influence is incalculable. It

should be remembered, however, that particular situations tend greatly to increase the effect of admonition; and, consequently, they enhance the obligation to improve every opportunity of resorting to it. What extensive good may be produced by the counsels of those, whose elevated rank renders every proof of their solicitude, for the happiness of their inferiors, most flattering and grateful to the feelings of those who are the objects of it! But chiefly is the duty of admonition vested in the sacred profession. To dissuade from impiety and vice, by the most powerful of all considerations, is the especial province of a Christian minister, who, by the diligent, earnest, and affectionate performance of this duty, *privately*, as well as *publicly*, may contribute more than any other individual in any other station, to promote the cause of virtue.

But, after all, the effect of good example and of salutary admonition, depends much on the disposition of those, on whom they are to operate, and who may be so depraved as to be incapable of being wrought upon by such gentle means. Nay, such persons, instead of being satisfied with the unmolested enjoyment, if enjoyment it can be called, of their own vices, are often zealous to seduce and corrupt others. At all events, their bad example, if suffered to be openly displayed, is extremely contagious;

and, aided by the evil propensities of human nature, it is much more likely to attract followers than examples of a contrary tendency. Moreover, in the state of society in which we live, there are many persons to whom the promotion of vice affords the means of gain, and who make no scruple to sacrifice the public morals, and the public welfare, to their own sordid views of interest. These considerations fully prove, that vice and immorality, unless subjected to legal restraints, would soon know no bounds. To provide such restraints, and to render them as effectual as the laws can make them, are among the most important objects of legislation. Vain would it be to enact laws against violence and rapine, if vice, the natural source of crimes, were free from legal coercion. No man sinks at once into the lowest depths of guilt and depravity, and the heart must be hardened by a long course of vicious indulgence, before it can brave the disgrace of a public trial, or the terrors of a public execution. But there are numberless instances which prove that, by habitual profligacy, it may be rendered so callous, as to become insensible, not only to shame, but to the dread of punishment. These powerful motives must, therefore, be made to operate upon it while it is susceptible of their influence; and a wise legislator will never lose

sight of the truth, that, to preserve men from the corruption of vice, is, at once, the easiest and the most effectual way to restrain them from the commission of crimes. If poison be suffered to be cast into the fountain-head, it would denote the most egregious folly to expect the waters of the stream to be pure and wholesome.

But the system of law will be radically defective which is not founded upon the principle, that Religion is the necessary safeguard, as well as the only solid basis, of morality. The mind which is impressed with no awe of the Supreme Being, with no fear of future punishment as the denounced consequence of present wickedness, is free from the most powerful, nay, from the only efficacious impulse, that can stimulate to virtue or deter from vice. Every temporal restraint upon human conduct may be overcome by temporal considerations. Virtuous principle may be made to yield to the force of temptation. The fear of disgrace may be vanquished by a hope to escape detection. The dread of punishment, even though detection should ensue, may be overpowered by an anticipation of the numerous chances which encourage guilt to flatter itself, that it shall ultimately elude justice. But what, in this world, can counterbalance the motives which are suggested by

Religion? What gratification, in the present state, can outweigh a fixed desire of eternal happiness, or a constant dread of eternal misery? Who that is sensible of being always in the sight of a Judge, "to whom all hearts are open, and from whom no secrets are hid," can hope to deceive His Omniscience, or to baffle His Justice?

This is not the place, and if it were, I should shrink from the arduous undertaking, to describe the incalculable benefits, of a positive kind, which Religion is capable of conferring upon society. On this most interesting subject I shall only observe, what indeed every one's reflection must readily suggest, that nothing can tend so much to make men good subjects, good citizens, and, in the fullest sense of the term, valuable members of a community, as the principle which, in its genuine operation, leads them to seek, as their greatest good, the favour of an infinitely perfect Being—who is privy to their inmost thoughts, as well as their most secret actions. It is obvious that, while such a principle governs the hearts of men, the laws will have very little trouble in regulating their lives. In short, as confidence is the chief bond of the social union, what can render that union so strong as a principle, the effect of which, whenever it prevails,

must be to render men deserving of all the confidence they can repose in each other?

But these considerations would be foreign from a discussion, the object of which is not to point out those approaches towards perfection, of which our nature is, indeed, capable, but which are so remote from all experience, as well as from our actual state, that the contemplation of them might be deemed a visionary speculation—but to recommend those means of reformation which are more immediately within our reach, and which, as they are now essential to our national safety, it would be madness in us to neglect. In this view of the subject religion presents itself to our notice not as a *purifying*, but as a *restraining* principle, operating, like human laws, upon the fears of men, by deterring them from acts which would expose them to punishment; and in that light it is, in its nature, for the reasons above stated, a far more powerful restraint, than human laws can be, on the passions and evil propensities of men; nay, it is to its restraining influence that those laws are chiefly indebted for their efficacy. It invests them, even when capital, with their principal terror, by subjecting their victims to the danger of an infinitely more tremendous penalty than the loss of life; and it thereby gives vigour to a criminal code, the spirit of which is mild and

lenient. But its aid is necessary, not merely to invigorate the sanctions of penal laws, but also to assist and facilitate their execution. It constitutes the whole force of that appeal to the Searcher of Hearts, which is the main spring of the administration of justice, and without which no human tribunal could have any hold on the consciences of men, whether they appear in the character of witnesses, or in that of jurymen or of judges. In fine, so obviously essential is religion to the very existence of civil society, that some infidels have represented it as a political invention, for the preservation of public order and quiet, which, without such aid, the laws would be utterly unable to maintain.

But in judging of the operation of religion, in giving efficacy to human laws, we must be careful not to confine our attention to its obvious effects. It exercises an invisible agency, the influence of which, though unperceived, is extremely operative in restraining from vice and from crime, and in keeping down the aggregate mass of moral evil in a community. It acts, in this respect, not merely on the virtuous, who own its ascendancy, but on the vicious and profligate, who seem, by their conduct, to renounce its authority and to defy its sactions. Multitudes of persons of the latter description have been preserved by it from entering so soon, as they

would otherwise have done, into their vicious courses; it has thereby saved them, perhaps, from incorrigible profligacy, perhaps, from the commission of capital offences; the early impressions they received from it, and which nothing can entirely efface but the corrosive poison of infidelity, sometimes recur to check them in their career of wickedness, by giving effect to the reproaches of conscience; and not unfrequently is it known that those impressions, revived by a dangerous illness, by a remarkable escape, by the awful fate of a companion in iniquity, by the awakening calls of friendly admonition, or by some other of the numerous incidents or influences, which are calculated to rouze the mind to salutary reflection, prove the happy means of reclaiming the most dissolute and abandoned, and of restoring them, as useful members, to society. At all events it may be considered as an indisputable truth that the bad, however bad they are, whose minds have been once seriously impressed with a sense of religion, would have been worse, (and how much so who will pretend to say?) if they had always been strangers to religious feelings. In order, however, to form an adequate notion of the benefits which the restraining influence of religion confers on society, it would be necessary to see a community entirely destitute of that

influence. Happily no such community is to be found. It is true an experiment has been made in our days which is deeply fraught with the most valuable instruction on this subject. We have seen a country endeavour to throw off its religion, by making a public profession of atheism—by denying a future state—and by decreeing death to be an eternal sleep. In a short time, however, that country became, literally, a hell upon earth; and its wretched inhabitants were rejoiced to return to religion, as their only refuge from the horrors of anarchy.

As religion is essential to the efficacy of human laws, surely it ought to receive from those laws all the support which it is in their power to afford and the legislator would be chargeable with the grossest absurdity, as well as with a most criminal neglect of duty, who should not endeavour, by their means, to promote the influence of this their most powerful auxiliary. But, it may be asked, is it in the power of human laws to compel men to be religious? Can they infuse into the heart a spirit of piety and devotion? Certainly not; but they can restrain those public acts of impiety which tend to bring religion into contempt; they can preserve its institutions from profanation; they can protect from blasphemy and open insult, the sacred name of its divine author; they can, in short, ensure to it that outward respect,

without which no inward sense of it can be expected long to exist. In doing all this, they afford a more effectual support to religion than may, at a first view of the subject be conceived. In thus maintaining that public decency which is due to it, they afford an opportunity for those sentiments of reverence which it naturally inspires, to produce their effect upon the human mind. Nay, the influence of those sentiments cannot fail to be promoted whenever any solicitude for its interests is displayed by the legislature. If, on the other hand, the laws neglect to restrain open impiety and profaneness, they, in effect, renounce that aid without which they are totally unequal to a contest with vice and with crime. For what assistance can they hope to obtain from religion if they suffer it to be treated with contempt? if they permit the day which it sanctifies to be flagrantly violated, or the name, which it consecrates to adoration, to be openly profaned? * What security can a state expect to de-

* It were to be wished that all persons, who are friendly to the interests of religion, would seriously consider how injurious to those interests is the practice of irreverently uttering, in common conversation, the name of the Supreme Being. This practice, which is, alas! exceedingly prevalent in all ranks of society, though it do not amount to the offence of profane swearing, involves the worst part of that offence—its *profaneness*. It is as direct a violation, as the most impious oath can be, of the commandment, which says,

rive from the sacred obligation of an oath, if He, to whose omniscience all oaths are a solemn appeal, may be publicly blasphemed with impunity? How, at least, can a country, where such practices are allowed to prevail, hope for the Divine favour and protection? Such a country may be justly considered in a state of open rebellion against the Most High. If an earthly sovereign be insulted, the laws are never backward to vindicate the respect and allegiance which are due to his crown and dignity. And shall the grossest insults to the Majesty of Heaven, by whom kings reign and princes administer justice, go unpunished in a Christian land? Surely the people

"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." It is absolutely incompatible with the sincere and devout use of that *Divine* prayer, which we are commanded to use by the Holy Founder of our religion, and one of the petitions of which is "Hallowed be thy Name." How can those who are guilty of such a practice repeat the above commandment, or offer the above petition, without feeling the stings of conscience reproaching them with the habitual breach of the duty, the sacred obligation of which they recognize in so solemn a manner? How much more consistent with the character of a Christian—how deserving of the imitation of all who assume that character—was the conduct of the Hon. Mr. Boyle! This gentleman was so deeply impressed with *that* reverential awe for the Supreme Being, which is the first principle of religion, and consequently of virtue, that he never uttered the name which we are forbidden *to take in vain*, without a solemn pause, expressive of awe and veneration.

who thus set their Maker at defiance, instead of being entitled to solicit his aid in a moment of danger, ought rather to look forward to some signal display of his vengeance.

The mischievous tendency with regard to the public morals, of whatever leads to indifference about religion, is too obvious to need any further illustration; but the important fact ought not, in this place, to pass unnoticed, that on various occasions it has been declared by malefactors, at the place of execution, that Sabbath-breaking was the first step of those fatal courses which brought them, at length, to an untimely and ignominious end.

Such being the influence of religion upon the morals of a country, it behoves every one who is solicitous for that reformation which we so much need, to remember that a religious establishment is necessary to keep alive that sense of religion, which is the active, and the only genuine principle of virtue. Because those who do not belong to such an establishment are often exemplary moral characters, many persons are apt to imagine that a National Church is not conducive to morality. But it is easily demonstrable, both by reasoning and experience, that such a Church is not only essential to the public tranquillity, and to the safety of the state, but necessary, also, by providing for the regular and

public worship of the Almighty, to preserve a country from indifference and apathy in regard to religion. Every serious and moral separatist from the church, will, therefore, while he professes that religion which his conscience best approves, feel it to be his duty to avoid and discourage whatever tends, by the remotest possibility, to injure the established Church; for whatever has such a tendency, not only exposes the state to be torn by religious dissensions, but also endangers the vital interests of morality itself. And surely this caution is particularly due in a country professing such a Church as that which is here established; a Church which not only breathes the genuine spirit of toleration, but also inculcates the purest system of Christian morality. The members of such a Church should remember that a still stronger obligation, if possible, is imposed upon them, than on any other description of persons, to lead strictly virtuous lives; for they cannot be guilty of any immoral practices without both disgracing and endangering the communion to which they belong; and from which those who are out of its pale are too often disposed to withdraw that respect, which is undoubtedly its due, on account of the unworthiness of any of its members.

The jurisprudence of all civilized countries has recognized the principle that laws for the

protection of the public morals, by the suppression of impiety and vice, are necessary auxiliaries to those, which have for their object the prevention of crimes that more immediately invade the public peace and security. In no country has that principle been more fully recognized than in this, where these laws are admirably combined in one harmonious system, and where impiety and vice, whenever, by their public nature and pernicious example, they render those on whom they are chargeable amenable to municipal law, are considered as crimes, subjecting their perpetrators to disgrace and punishment.* It must, however, be acknowledged, that the effect of this part of our penal code is very far from corresponding with the care which the framers of our laws seem to have bestowed upon it. Judging, indeed, from the prohibitions contained in our Statute Book, any one would conclude that acts of profaneness and immorality must be very rare in this country, or at least that they must be most studiously concealed from public notice; but judging from

* It must be owned that this general observation admits of an exception in the case of adultery, which, though the most pernicious vice that can exist in society, is not by the law of England punishable as a crime. Such an exception is alike disgraceful to our criminal code, and injurious to our morals. See a letter on this subject to the Hon. Spencer Perceval.

actual observation no one would suppose that such acts are really prohibited by law. Certain it is that practices, in direct violation of the laws which are made for the protection of religion and morality; that profanation of the Lord's Day—profane cursing and swearing—tippling and drunkenness—lewdness, prostitution, and gaming, seem, by their frequency and flagrancy, to be ingrafted into the very manners of society; while nothing is more rare than an infliction of the penalties to which those practices are liable. How notoriously is the Sabbath broken, as often as it recurs; how often is the drunkard seen reeling about the streets; how generally are public-houses converted, by the mischievous practice of tippling, into nurseries of idleness, vice and crime; how frequently do the most horrid oaths assail our ears; what swarms of prostitutes infest our streets; what numbers of brothels are kept in our towns, not only as the haunts of profligacy, but for the seduction of innocence; how common and how little regarded are cases of bastardy, and what a deplorable proof does their frequency afford of the extreme licentiousness and debauchery of the lower orders; but how seldom are the above offences followed by the punishment which the law denounces against them!

This apparent discrepancy between our laws and our morals is chiefly imputable to two causes, which it behoves every one, who has any regard for the best interests of society, to do all in his power to remove. The first of those causes is the inefficiency of the laws themselves. It is obvious that to render penal laws, of any description, effectual to the attainment of their object, they must occasionally undergo such revision and amendment, as may enable them to keep pace with the manners of the times, and with the various changes which are perpetually occurring in the circumstances of social life: and this, it must be confessed, is done with regard to those which are made for the immediate protection of persons of property. But on those which have for their object the suppression of vice and impiety, though essential (as has been shewn) to the efficacy of the former, the same attention is not bestowed. It may indeed be considered as a proof of the depravity of modern times that the care of the public morals, though one of the most important objects that can engage the attention of the legislature, is of all those objects the most neglected. Whether this proceeds from the increased and wearisome occupation in which our legislators have, for a long time, been incessantly engaged by the warfare of political

parties, the present is not an apt occasion to enquire : but certain it is that, while our criminal code is sure to engage the attention of Parliament, whenever the laws are inadequate to restrain those offences which are ordinarily denominated crimes, vice and impiety have triumphed over the feebleness of the legal restraints to which they are subjected, because no measures have been adopted, for a long course of years, to render those restraints more efficacious; nay, such is the levity of the age, that any attempt for that purpose is almost sure to be treated with ridicule. Hence it is, that, in consequence of the prodigious diminution which has taken place in the value of money, the pecuniary penalties, in which such restraints chiefly consist, are become in most instances nugatory, and in some absolutely ridiculous. If our ancestors judged rightly in calculating the amount of the penalties, which they deemed necessary to afford a check to particular offences, surely a like proportion between the crime and the punishment should still be preserved, and the occasional interference of the Legislature for that purpose, independently of its immediate object, would have a most salutary effect on the public sentiments, by proving that they consider the Religion and the Morals of the Country as matters

of high moment, and inseparably connected with its welfare*.

In some instances our laws are inefficient, not merely for want of adequate penalties, but because they do not contain provisions capable of reaching, with sufficient facility and effect, the offences which they are intended to suppress. Thus, in the case of keeping a brothel, the laws are so difficult of execution, that this offence, which, by corrupting the manners of youth, and inducing, in early life, habits which are destructive of all taste for domestic happiness, may be considered as one of the great causes of the profligacy of the age, seems, nevertheless, to defy all attempts, not merely to suppress it, but to keep it within any bounds of public decorum. In like manner, the existing laws are totally inadequate to restrain the most pestiferous offence of circulating obscene books and prints. It is true, this offence, whenever it can be brought home to any individual, is rightly considered by our courts of justice as deserving the severest penalties which the law can inflict, in the case of a misdemeanour. But it is perpetrated with such secrecy, as almost to defy detection. For, as the law now stands, nothing but proof of the actual publication of an indecent book or print can furnish a ground

* Of the mischiefs, inseparable from the neglect of such interference, on the part of the legislature, the case of Sunday Newspapers affords a memorable proof. (See the Supplementary Note.)

for prosecution; and the dealers in those mischievous articles find it easy to baffle all attempts to obtain such proof, though it is but too certain that they are incessantly debauching, by means of this worst of poison, the morals of the rising generation. In order effectually to correct the evil, it is indispensably necessary that the possession of such articles, *for the purpose of sale*, which, in the eye of reason, is a worse crime than many which are capitally punished, should also be a crime in the eye of the law; and that for the purpose of detecting it, a power of search and seizure should be granted; to be exercised under the authority of a magistrate, upon satisfactory proof that there is, in the particular instance, just cause for suspicion. Should this remedy be objected to by the advocates for freedom, let it be remembered, that such powers are allowed, and with still fewer restrictions, for the protection of the revenue; and unless it can be shewn that the morals of a country are of less importance than its revenue, they ought surely to be protected with at least an equal degree of care.

It is not, however, enough that the laws be, in their own nature, efficacious, that is, adequate, as far as their provisions can render them so, to the purpose for which they are enacted; it is also necessary that they have a strict and vigilant, by which however is not meant a

harsh and rigorous, execution. It is observed by the celebrated commentator of our laws, "that crimes are more effectually prevented by the certainty than by the severity of punishment." But such is the feebleness of the first of these preventive checks in this country, with regard to such crimes as are a transgression of the laws against impiety and vice, that the violation of those laws, instead of being restrained by the certainty of punishment, seems rather to be encouraged by the certainty of impunity. This, as has been already shewn, is an evil of the greatest magnitude; and it is one of so portentous an aspect, that it threatens the entire corruption of our morals. Its correction, therefore, demands the most serious attention and the most strenuous exertions of every one who is solicitous for that reformation which affords, certainly our best, and, in all probability, our only chance of ultimate preservation, amidst the awful and unprecedented dangers to which we are exposed.

For, inadequate as the laws for the protection of Religion and good Morals undoubtedly are, the principal cause of their being attended with so little effect, is the defectiveness of their execution. Let it not, however, be supposed that this statement is intended to cast any censure on the Magistracy of this country, to which

the execution of those laws is, in an especial manner, entrusted. The persons who now fill that important station do, in general, surpass their predecessors at any former period in respectability of character, and in qualifications for their important office: but in consequence of the growing inefficiency of the laws which it is their immediate province to execute, of the corrupting influence of wealth and luxury, and of the consequent prevalence of vicious habits, nay, partly in consequence of the supineness or inadequacy of their predecessors, their duty, in the above respect, is become so arduous, that its adequate performance is a thing rather to be anxiously desired, than reasonably expected. The difficulties, however, which attend it, instead of being suffered to produce despondency or inertness, should stimulate to extraordinary exertion. Most solemn is the engagement, most awful is the responsibility of every one, who undertakes the magisterial office; and, though in times like the present, it is next to impossible to render that office so beneficial as in its nature it is calculated, and in its institution it is designed to be; yet a magistrate, who unites discretion with vigilance, energy and firmness, qualities which are always essential to the due discharge of his duties, and who, by his example, gives consistency and effect to his official exertions, may, even

in these degenerate days, do much towards stemming the torrent of licentiousness and profligacy.

But, in order to administer the laws with effect, the magistrate stands in need of much more assistance, than is at present afforded him, in the execution of his office. His ordinary course of proceeding is by *information;* for though he may convict, in many cases, upon his own view, yet the instances in which he can be expected to exercise that right, especially as his presence must operate as a restraint on those who are disposed to violate the law, must be, comparatively, so few, as scarcely to deserve notice: and with regard to offences against religion and morality, his chief, nay, it may almost be said, his only dependence is on peace officers, who, considering the manner in which they are chosen into office, and the description of persons in whom that important character is usually vested, are not likely to take a very active part in bringing such offences to the notice of the magistrate. Indeed, they have in general no notion of this part of their duty, but seem to think that the functions of their office consist solely, in executing warrants, and in preventing or suppressing gross and outrageous breaches of the peace. Therefore, although they are in the constant habit of witnessing flagrant violations of the laws against vice and profaneness, they are scarcely ever known to lay informations

against the offenders, and it is scarcely possible to prevail on them to perform that duty. Nay, there is too much reason to fear that most of them are accustomed, in some way or other, themselves to violate those laws.

It is true every individual has an undoubted right to inform against any person who infringes the criminal law. A crime is an injury to the whole community, every member of which is therefore entitled, by prosecution, to call for the punishment of the offender. To encourage the exercise of this right the legislature has, in many cases, offered rewards to those who assert it. There exists, however, a prejudice, extremely unfavourable to justice, and studiously promoted by guilt, against those who are induced by such offers to assume the character of informers. But what can be more commendable, what more honourable, than for individuals, without any view to private emolument, and solely for the sake of the general benefit, to assume that character? Considering, indeed, how deeply the community is interested in a strict execution of the laws which are made for the protection of its religion and morals, and how closely the interests of every individual are interwoven with those of the public at large, it might be expected that persons would never be wanting, to undertake the truly praise-worthy task of informing against the viola-

tors of those laws. Experience, however, proves the fallacy of such expectations; and a little reflection will suffice to shew, that, especially in the present corrupt state of society, something more than the interest which each individual has in the general welfare, is necessary to induce even the best disposed persons to assume the troublesome, and perhaps expensive, though praiseworthy character of informers; or to incur what is still more repulsive than any consideration of trouble or expense, the odium to which those who prosecute offences against religion and morality are unhappily exposed. For, incredible as it may seem, whoever renders this important service to his country, and one more important can scarcely be rendered it, either in the senate, the cabinet, or the field, is almost sure, however pure and disinterested his motives, to be rewarded with censure or derision. He must expect not only to be considered as officious and austere, but also to be branded with the epithets of puritan or fanatic. Few persons have nerve enough to subject their conduct to such constructions, especially for the sake of bringing to justice offenders by whom they have not been injured, more than every other member of the community. Nay, few are likely, for such a purpose, to encounter even that dread of singularity which is so prevalent in the human breast. Crimes of an outrageous nature, which, besides endangering

the general security, involve a direct attack upon the person or property of particular individuals, can scarcely fail to be followed by prosecution, because some persons have a distinct interest in bringing the criminals to justice; and whoever exerts himself for that purpose is sure to meet with general approbation. But by swearing, Sabbath-breaking and drunkenness, no one is particularly or distinctly attacked or injured; and therefore, though all have a common interest in preventing such offences from being committed with impunity, no one is disposed, for such an object, to take any trouble, and still less to expose himself to obloquy and ridicule. Besides, these practices are so common, that fatally injurious as they are, in the aggregate, to society, the mischief produced in each particular instance, is scarcely perceptible; hence, instead of exciting that horror, which, as flagrant breaches of the laws both of God and man, and as fraught with the utmost mischief to the interests which those laws are intended to protect, they ought, invariably, to produce, they are generally viewed with indifference, amounting to apathy.

For these reasons it is but too plain, that private individuals are even less to be depended upon than peace officers, to give information to magistrates of offences which attack the vital interests of a community—its religion and its morals.

How then are those offences to be suppressed? how are those interests to be protected? Is there no resource to preserve the laws against impiety and vice from becoming altogether a dead letter? Happily the case is not so desperate. Happily the difficulties and discouragements which preclude all hope of adequate individual exertions to enforce those laws, do not attend the united efforts of individuals, when formed into societies for that purpose. Such societies, by the weight and respectability which they necessarily carry with them, afford their members a protection, which no unconnected individuals can enjoy, against prejudice, censure and derision. Improper motives can scarcely be attributed to them, except by those who are, not only unwilling that any restraint should be imposed upon vice, but also bold enough to appear as its advocates, in the face of the world. They also possess advantages for the detection and prosecution of offenders which can belong only to associated efforts. The mutual communication between their members affords them opportunities for extensive information, and enables them to pursue their common object in a regular and systematic manner, and with all the aids that can be derived from deliberate consultation—of which discretion is to be considered as among the most important. They also appear with much

greater effect than any individual can do before a magistrate or a judge, who can scarcely fail to be gratefully sensible of the assistance they afford him in maintaining the authority of the laws, by preventing them from being violated with impunity. Besides all this, the very existence of such societies operates as a powerful check to the progress of vice, by obliging it to take refuge in concealment, and thereby preserving the inexperienced and unwary from many snares, which would otherwise be openly spread for them; by deterring the dissolute from displaying that open contempt of decency, which tends gradually to efface all respect for virtue from the human mind; and by affording many opportunities of exercising with effect that persuasive influence, which delights to supersede the necessity of punishment, by the more lenient methods of prevention.

That private persons are entitled to form themselves into societies, for the purpose of enforcing the laws, is a truth which needs no illustration. The right which undoubtedly belongs to individuals, to inform against and prosecute offenders, would be often, and in case of offences against religion and morality, altogether nugatory, if it could not be exercised collectively; and, in that case, the subject would be deprived of his most valuable birth-right, the protection of law. Indeed, societies for the detection and

prosecution of criminals of various descriptions, have long existed in this country, and their legality has been invariably recognised in courts of justice. Such societies are analogous in principle to the great society to which we all belong; which is an association, though not a self-formed one, for general security, by the aid of law. But when societies of this description have for their object to enforce the laws against profaneness and immorality, it is not enough to say that they are legal and justifiable; they are then laudable and beneficial in the highest degree; and their establishment is, perhaps, the most meritorious act in which individuals can concur. Without their aid, as has been already shewn, the laws which are made for the protection of the public morals would have little chance of execution; and as such laws are at all times necessary, it follows, of course, that the societies which alone can ensure their effect, should at all times exist. Few parishes, at least in the vicinity of the metropolis, are at any time without their associations for the detection and punishment of house-breakers and other kind of depredators; although, in such cases, individual injury might be expected to furnish a sufficient motive for prosecution. Surely then an association should be formed, wherever its aid is wanting to give effect to the laws against vice and irreligion; offences which sap the very

foundations of society, and which are sure to triumph over the laws, unless the latter be assisted by the associated efforts of the friends of religion and virtue. Indeed, the principle of associating for that purpose is necessary, to give vigour and effect to our whole system of legal polity. Unsupported by that principle, the laws would, even in ordinary times, be unequal to a contest with vice, and consequently ineffectual to check the progress of crime. But when degeneracy is the character of the age, then it may truly be said that an extensive establishment of vigilant and energetic societies, of the kind above described, affords the only effectual means of preventing an utter corruption of morals.

If no considerations of a public nature called for the interference of such societies, motives of private benevolence should never fail to excite their activity. A strict execution of the laws against vice, is the greatest possible benefit that can be conferred on the vicious themselves. What can be so kind as thus to check their vicious career, when it is hurrying them down the fatal steep of, perhaps, endless destruction? What can be so humane as to afford them time for that consideration, which is an indispensable preliminary to amendment? And what will be their obligation to those to whom they may owe their preservation, from infamy and ruin;

and their restoration to peace, happiness, and respectability? If we neglect the means which are not only in our power, but most obviously within our reach, of conferring such benefits on our fellow creatures. we can have no claim to that genuine and godlike charity, which is made the practical test of our Holy Religion, and of which we may be destitute, though we "bestow all our goods to feed the poor."

The history of this country holds out a most encouraging invitation to the formation of such societies, by displaying a memorable example of the benefits they are capable of producing. At a time when the vices of a corrupt and dissolute court had produced their natural effect, general licentiousness and profligacy, the comparative few, who had escaped the prevailing infection, justly alarmed at the dangers inseparable from such a state, formed themselves into "Societies for the reformation of manners," by promoting the execution of the laws against profaneness and vice. The example, indeed, was set, as may be supposed, by a few individuals; but, so obvious was the beneficial tendency of such institutions, that they gradually increased, until they were to be found in most of the corporate towns of England. To the honour of Queen Mary, she bestowed upon them her fostering patronage; and they were "publicly and solemnly approved by a

considerable number of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal," and of the "Judges," both in England and Ireland. They were, moreover, " recommended occasionally, and in another manner, by most of the Bishops in their circular letters *."

* See " An Account of the Progress of the Reformation of Manners," the 5th Edition of which was published in 1706. In this publication is contained a specimen of an agreement for the forming of a society for the reformation of manners, in any city, town, or village, where there are but three or four persons that are willing to engage in such a society." The following are the introductory regulations suggested in this " specimen."

" We whose names are hereunto subscribed, out of a sense of the duty we owe to Almighty God, in pursuance of her Majesty's *Proclamation* for the discouragement and prosecution of *Debauchery* and *Prophaneness*, and for the suppressing of them, do agree as followeth.

" I. That we meet weekly at under the penalty of for each default, without a just cause, to consult how we may be most serviceable in promoting the execution of the laws against *Prophaneness* and *Debauchery*.

" II. That we use all proper means to prevail with men of all ranks to concur with us in this design, especially such as are under the obligation of Oaths, to do so ; and in order to their acting vigorously therein, that we endeavour to persuade them to form themselves into *Societies*, at least to have *frequent meetings* for this purpose.

" III. That we encourage and assist officers in the discharge of their duty, of discovering *disorderly houses*, of taking up of offenders, and carrying them before the magistrates ; and moreover endeavour *to assist both magistrates and officers, by giving informations ourselves, as we have opportunity*."

But, recommended chiefly by their happy effects, their salutary influence was not confined to this country, but extended itself to Scotland * and Ireland; nay, even to North America and the West Indies, as well as to many parts of the European continent. In short, the excellence of the design, and the great advantages which attended its execution, seemed every where to inspire the virtuous part of mankind with new energy, and to rouse them to animated and vigorous exertions in that opposition to vice, the success of which involves the well being of human society, as well as the happiness of the individuals of whom it is composed.

It may, perhaps, be asked, why, if these societies proved so beneficial, were they, at length, discontinued. The true answer is, *because* they were so eminently beneficial. Their effects in stemming the torrent to which they were opposed were so manifest, and so considerable, that the alarm which the roar of that torrent had produced, subsided; and the societies, which had been established only in consequence of such alarm, gradually disappeared. It is not, however, to be presumed that they were no longer necessary. Unless vice could be extirpated, such

* In the city of Edinburgh, no fewer than thirteen of these societies were established.

societies, as has been already observed, are always wanted to prevent it from gaining an ascendancy. Unremitting vigilance is still more necessary in society than in individuals, to keep down and controul this natural and implacable enemy of the human race. But, unhappily, in good undertakings, zeal is generally *damped*, while, in bad ones, it is *inflamed*, by success; a difference which affords a striking proof of the propensity of human nature to evil. Thus with regard to the societies in question, when their necessity became less urgent, in consequence of the good which they had done, they lost the zeal by which alone they could be kept together. And it may not, perhaps, be unjust to add, that their members, in general, were less actuated by a genuine love of religion and virtue, than by a dread of the temporal consequences which must follow the entire prevalence of impiety and vice. Satisfied, therefore, with having, for the time, averted the danger which they most dreaded, they discontinued the exertions which never ceased to be necessary, to prevent a recurrence of that danger.

It would, indeed, be difficult to ascertain, with precision, how far the dissolution of the societies which, at the commencement of the last century, were attended with such happy effects, has concurred with the corrupting influence of luxury,

in producing that alarming state of degeneracy, which we have now to deplore. But if such societies had continued to exist, from that time to this, in an uninterrupted train of succession; and if, with a vigilant activity, equal only to that of a parochial association against thieves, they had continued to watch the illegal practices of the profane and the dissolute; who will attempt to calculate the effects they would have had in counteracting the influence of luxury, and in checking the progress of licentiousness? Who will venture to say, that public decency and a respect for the laws against profaneness and vice, instead of an open contempt for both, would not have been the character of the present age? Who will presume to count the individuals, who, by the beneficial restraint which such societies must have imposed on them, would have been prevented from surrendering themselves to hopeless debauchery, or the families which would have been preserved from wretchedness and ruin?

But if such societies, when they had succeeded in reforming the manners of the nation, were still necessary to preserve it from relapsing into the depths of profligacy; if they are at all times necessary to afford the magistrate that information, without which it is out of his power to prevent the laws against irreligion and immorality, from

sinking into contempt; how imperious is the necessity which demands their efficacious assistance at the present awful moment, when on that national reformation, which it would be vain to expect by any other means, depends our best, perhaps our last hope of preservation, from an abyss of ruin, which has ingulphed so many of the nations of Europe, and which seems to yawn for all the remaining establishments of the civilized world? It does not admit a doubt that the vices of individuals, as far as they are owing to a defect of the laws, or to the neglect of their execution, are *national sin*; for which, as for all public acts or omissions, the state, by a fundamental principle of society, is *collectively* responsible; and which, when carried to an enormous extent, must, at length, if the world be subject to the government of its Creator, be productive of *national judgments*. Bold, then, must he be, who, considering the extent of our vices, and the gross inadequacy or neglect of the laws to restrain them, does not, at this time, tremble for his country. Nay, bold, or rather infatuated, must he be who does not instantly lay it seriously to heart, how he can best contribute to preserve his native land from the punishment which it so justly merits. To the legislature must be left the important and long neglected task of rendering the laws an efficient bulwark to

religion and morals. But all who occupy the private stations of society have it in their power, even in their individual capacity, and, with unspeakably more facility and effect, by means of associated efforts, to exercise their indisputable right of calling for the execution of those laws. And it is by combining together for that purpose, according to the auspicious example displayed by our ancestors, at a period far less awful than the present, nay, when no sense of external danger impelled to such exertions, that individuals may most effectually promote that national reformation, which would afford, at this awful crisis, the *best means of* NATIONAL SAFETY: for it was no less truly than eloquently said, on a memorable occasion, that "the religious and moral sense of Great Britain, is the sheet anchor which alone can hold the vessel of the state, amidst the storms which agitate the world *."

* Speech of the Hon. Thomas Erskine, on a Trial for a libel entitled the "Age of Reason."

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTE

ON

SUNDAY NEWSPAPERS.

IN order to preserve a decent observance of the Lord's Day, without which all respect for Religion must soon be banished from a Christian Country, the law of England, in conformity with the express command of the Almighty, requires a cessation of all secular business on that day: and it subjects to a penalty of Five Shillings every "Tradesman, Artificer, Workman, Labourer, or other person whatsoever, who shall do or exercise any worldly labour or business of their ordinary callings, upon the Lord's Day, or any part thereof, (works of necessity and charity only excepted);" it also declares that "no person shall publicly cry, shew forth, or expose to sale any wares, merchandizes, fruit, herbs, &c. upon the Lord's Day, upon pain of forfeiture of the goods so cried or exposed to sale." A consideration for the necessities of mankind has induced the legislature to admit of two exceptions, in the sale of mackarel and of milk, out of the hours of Divine Service, on account obviously of the perishable nature of those articles of subsistence; but in all other cases the law is absolute. Of the wisdom of this stated interruption of the ordinary habits of life, in a political as well as a religious view, the following observations of the celebrated commentator on the laws of England, furnish an apt illustration.—"Besides the notorious indecency and scandal, of permitting any secular business to be publicly transacted on that day, in a Country professing Christianity, and the corruption of morals which usually follows its profanation, the keeping one day in seven holy, as a time of relaxation and refreshment as well as for public worship, is of admirable service to a state, considered merely as a Civil Institution. It humanizes, by the help of conversation and society, the manners of the lower classes;

which would otherwise degenerate into a sordid ferocity and savage selfishness of spirit: it enables the industrious workman to pursue his occupation in the ensuing week with health and cheerfulness: it imprints on the minds of the people that sense of their duty to God, so necessary to make them good Christians; but which yet would be worn out and defaced by an unremitted continuance of labour, without any stated times of recalling them to the worship of their Maker."

Notwithstanding this law, a few years ago, a practice of publishing and selling Newspapers on a Sunday, began to prevail; a practice attended with so much profit, that the low penalty of Five Shillings was totally inadequate to restrain it, while the penalty of forfeiture, to which goods exposed to sale on the Lord's Day are liable, could not be enforced, on account of the defective provisions of the law. For a time, indeed, in order to reconcile the feelings of the public to this innovation on their ancient and their better habits, it was customary to insert in the Sunday Newspapers a religious or moral essay; but those feelings no longer require such an apology for the breach of the Sabbath. To render the law in this case adequate to its design, a Bill was brought into the House of Commons by a Noble Lord, (now in the Upper House,) who is an ornament to his illustrious rank. This Bill was thrown out by a majority of 40 to 26; and with all due respect to the House of Commons of that day, I must be allowed to observe, that, according to the published report of the debates which took place on the occasion, it was rejected on very insufficient grounds. The following appear in those reports to have been the principal reasons assigned for its rejection.* First, it was urged that reading of the Newspapers on a Sunday was an innocent recreation, and that many persons, for want of any other opportunity of perusing them, would be "deprived of all means of information on political subjects, if they were not allowed

* See Debrett's Parliamentary Register, Vol. 50 & 51.

that privilege." It is difficult for those who are at all acquainted with the habits of the lower orders to believe that this argument was intended to produce any other than a ludicrous effect. At least, it is certain, that those persons, without the lights afforded them by Sunday Newspapers, would have no reason to complain of a want of opportunity to obtain political information, even if it were not true that a daily paper is published, principally for *their* use, and which has its chief circulation at the public houses where they resort—it might almost be said, where they *live*. But, it was observed, there was an exception in favour of selling mackarel on the Lord's Day; and that "people might think stale news as bad as stale mackarel." This witty effusion, however, would not require any notice if it did not afford a proof that even the gravity of Parliament can impose no restraint on those, who are disposed to laugh down every attempt to support the religion and the morals of the Country. Another ground on which the Bill was opposed, was its interference with the private interests of the proprietors of Sunday Newspapers, and with the public revenue. As to the first of these topics, it involves a doctrine of a most dangerous and reprehensible nature—that individuals, who embark their property in undertakings which are prohibited by law, acquire thereby a right to plead their offence before the legislature, and to claim its protection against any attempt to give effect to the laws which they have violated. With regard to the argument drawn from considerations of revenue, it could not have any weight in inducing a rejection of the Bill. For it is not to be supposed that Parliament would act upon the principle that the interest of Religion should give way to those of revenue. But, the topic principally insisted on, in opposition to the Bill, was that the papers published on the Monday cause a greater violation of the Sabbath, than those which it was the object of the Bill to suppress: for the former, it was urged, were chiefly prepared on the Sunday, while the latter were printed and published on the Sunday morning, before the time for Divine Service. This mode of reasoning, though

often resorted to, is liable to a very serious objection, and should never be permitted to pass without censure; for it implies, that the existence of one offence may afford a reason for the permission of another. But such an argument, in the present instance, besides being vicious in its nature, is founded upon false premises. The Sunday newspapers, even in respect of preparation and printing, occasion a much grosser violation of the Lord's Day than those which are published on the Monday. For these are not put to press till the time allotted to public Worship is past, and consequently they do not interfere with an attendance on that worship. But the others are printed during the Saturday night, and the early part of the Sunday morning; and the men who are thus kept from their rest can hardly be expected, however well disposed they may be, to attend Divine Service so soon after the termination of their labours. It ought also to be remembered that the interference with the duties of the day which is occasioned by the *printing* of Sunday newspapers, is a *necessary* consequence of the evil complained of, and that, in the other case, there is *no necessity whatever* for any violation of the Sabbath. For the composition of the Monday papers might, for the greatest part, be finished on the Saturday night, reserving space for the insertion of any news which may happen to arrive on the Sunday; and they might be completed and put to press *after* the Sunday is over, without any delay of publication. Nay, although some such delay should occasionally, or even constantly occur, no greater inconvenience would be produced than is experienced whenever a long debate takes place in Parliament.

But the Sunday newspapers are the cause of another, and of a much grosser violation of the Sabbath, than is involved in the act of printing; a violation which is peculiar to those papers, and which it was the main object of the Bill to prevent, though it received but little notice from those by whom the Bill was opposed. The operation of printing is carried on in a private room, accessible to a very few persons; but the sale of the papers in question is a *public* act—it is an open, a notorious breach of the Sabbath. It therefore holds out a most mischievous example to the many thousands

who witness it, and it tends to efface from their minds all reverence for a day, which the generality are but little disposed to revere. It is made, by a variety of arts, to excite their curiosity, when otherwise, perhaps, they would not think of looking into a newspaper; and it thereby diverts their attention from the appropriate duties of the day. It holds out an invitation to persons engaged in other trades, to endeavour to realize some profit on the Sunday; for there is no reason whatever, why any other commodity should not be sold on that day as well as newspapers. In no other case would such sale be a more direct breach of the law of the land. In none would it be a grosser, nay, in few would it be so gross, a profanation of the Sabbath. For, in this instance, that profanation is, from the nature of the case, attended with a peculiar degree of publicity, and with circumstances of greater scandal and offence, than would attend the sale of any other commodity. It is therefore peculiarly calculated to break down that barrier of sentiment, which is the best defence of the laws that support religion and morality, and without the aid of which, the task of enforcing those laws would be harsh and odious, if not impracticable. Add to all this, the practice which calls so loudly for correction, reduces a great number of individuals to the necessity, from which most of them would rejoice to be exempt, of violating the Sabbath by an uninterrupted pursuit of their ordinary occupations; and it thus robs them of the inestimable benefits of an institution, which sets apart one day in seven, not only for the worship of God, but also for the refreshment of man after his labour and fatigue. This would be cruel and oppressive, even if those persons were not sensible of the hardship; but it appeared upon the discussion of the Bill, that many of them felt it severely. For the Noble Mover is reported, during that discussion, to have read a letter from certain distributors, 129 in number, in which they stated that "they were exceedingly unhappy and distressed at being, in their calling, under the necessity of distributing of newspapers on a Sunday;" "that they were anxious, according to the commandment of God, to keep the Sabbath holy, both on their own account, and as a proper example to their friends, children, servants and families;

that they therefore prayed that the law might be put in force." It may seem incredible, that, in the legislature of a Christian Country, such a prayer, even if there had been no other reason for the passing of the Bill, should not be listened to; and that the interests of the few who derived gain from violating the Sabbath and the law, should seem to receive more attention than the wishes of the many who were desirous of respecting both.

In consequence of this refusal of the legislature to give effect to the positive law of the land, which had been framed in conformity with the express law of God, the rank offence of violating the Sabbath, by the sale of Sunday newspapers, has increased in a manner, which may well startle the gentlemen who opposed the correction of the evil, while it was in its infancy. The number of Sunday newspapers now published, is no less than 12. It may be more, for they are still rapidly increasing, and one is about to be published on the Sunday evening. The number of papers sold each Sunday is upwards of 25,000. The number of men and boys employed in printing and distributing them, is about 1000. And though, when their suppression was proposed in Parliament, a gentleman who opposed that measure stated, that they "were published on the Sunday morning *before the earliest species of Divine Worship*," they are now, openly on sale and in circulation through the whole of the Lord's Day. No pains are spared to make their distribution as general and as public as possible. Besides the gross indecency of announcing them by the blowing of horns, whenever they contain any extraordinary news, green grocers, hair dressers, and pastry-cooks throughout the metropolis and its vicinity, are furnished with sign boards, intimating that particular papers are to be sold at their respective shops, and they are copiously supplied with copies, of which the number unsold are returned on the Monday morning. These papers are also most diffusely circulated, by means of the stage coaches, throughout the country.

To counterbalance so great an evil, it is sometimes urged, that the country derives a considerable revenue from the sale of Sunday papers, and it cannot be denied that they pour into the public coffers no less a sum than £.20,000 per annum; a sum, however, which would be most extravagantly purchased at the expense of the public morals, even if it were a nett produce. But so far from this being the case, it may justly be doubted, whether, upon the whole, the revenue be really a gainer by the papers in question; since in proportion to the increase of Sunday new-papers the sale of those which are published on the Friday and the Saturday has decreased; and in one instance from 7000 to 500. For many persons omit to purchase a paper on the last mentioned days, reserving themselves for the plentiful meal they expect to make on the Sunday.

The mischief inseparable from so flagrant and extensive a violation of the Sabbath is greatly increased by the circumstance, that the law of the land is, at the same time, violated. Every sale of a Sunday paper (to say nothing of the printing), is a breach of that law. How then must such a practice tend to diminish the efficacy of the laws in general, to bring their authority into contempt, and to promote that spirit of insubordination, which is a distinguishing feature of the times! In such a case, the legislature should repeal the law for its own sake, if it will not, which is more obviously its duty, reinforce it for the sake of the public. It were certainly better that there were no laws against impiety and vice, than that such laws should remain a dead letter on the statute-book. But let us hope that this important subject will be seriously re-considered; and that Parliament will lose no time in correcting an evil, which tends to produce an utter disregard for that day, which the political interests of the country, as well as the Divine commands, require us to "keep holy."

THE END.

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